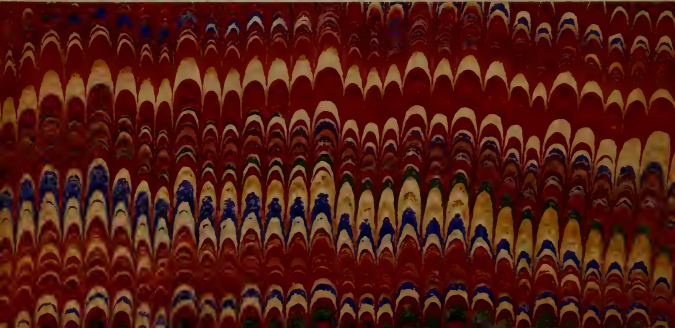


William Willis,

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CONTARINI FLEMING.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTO-BIOGRAPHY.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

III.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

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VI.

ANOTHER Sun rose upon Venice, and presented to me the city, whose image I had so early acquired. In the heart of a multitude, there was stillness. I looked out from the balcony on the crowded quays of yesterday; one or two idle porters were stretched in sleep on the scorching pavement, and a solitary gondola stole over the gleaming waters. This was all.

It was the Villeggiatura, and the absence of the nobility from the city invested it with an aspect even more deserted, than it would otherwise have possessed. I cared not for this. For me indeed Venice, silent

and desolate, owned a greater charm, than it could have commanded with all its feeble imitation of the worthless bustle of a modern metropolis. I congratulated myself on the choice season of the year in which I had arrived at this enchanting city. I do not think that I could have endured to have been disturbed by the frivolous sights and sounds of society, before I had formed a full acquaintance with all those marvels of Art, that command our constant admiration, while gliding about the lost capital of the Doges, and before I had yielded a free flow to those feelings of poetic melancholy, which swell up in the soul, as we contemplate this memorable theatre of human action, wherein have been performed so many of man's most famous and most graceful deeds.

If I were to assign the particular quality, which conduces to that dreamy, and voluptuous existence, which men of high imagination experience in Venice, I should describe it as the feeling of Abstraction, which is remarkable in that city, and peculiar to it. Venice is the only city which can yield the magical delights of Solitude. All is still and silent. No rude sound disturbs your reveries; Fancy, therefore, is not put to flight. No rude sound distracts your self-consciousness. This renders existence intense. We feel everything. And we feel thus keenly in a city not only eminently beautiful, not only abounding in wonderful creations of Art, but each step of which is hallowed ground, quick with associations, that in their more various nature, their nearer relation to

ourselves, and perhaps their more picturesque character, exercise a greater influence over the imagination, than the more antique story of Greece and Rome. We feel all this in a city too, which, although her lustre be indeed dimmed, can still count among her daughters, maidens fairer than the orient pearls with which her warriors once loved to deck them. Poetry, Tradition, and Love, these are the Graces that have invested with an ever-charming cestus this Aphrodite of cities.

As for myself, ere the year drew to a close, I was so captivated with the life of blended contemplation and pleasure that I led in this charming city, that I entirely forgot my great plan of comprehensive travel, that was to induce such important results, and not conceiving that Earth could

yield me a spot, where time could flow on in a more beautiful, and tranquil measure, more exempt from worldly anxiety, and more free from vulgar thoughts, I determined to become a Venetian resident. So I quitted the house of my fathers, which its proprietor would not give up to me, and in which, under its present fortune, I could not bear to live, converted Lausanne into a major-domo, and engaged a palace on the Grand Canal.

VII.

THERE is in Venice a very ancient church, situate in an obscure quarter of the city, whither I was in the habit of often resorting. It is full of the tombs of Contarinis.

Two doges under their fretwork canopies, with their hands crossed over their breasts, and their heads covered with their caps of state, and reposing on pillows, lie on each side of the altar. On the platform before the church, as you ascend the steps from your gondola, is a colossal statue of a Contarini, who defeated the Genoese. It is a small church built and endowed by the family. To this day there, they sing masses for their souls.

One sunshiny afternoon, I entered this church, and repaired, as was my custom, to the altar, which, with its tombs, was partially screened from the body of the building, being lighted by the large window in front, which considerably overtopped the screen. They were singing a mass in the nave, and I placed myself at

the extreme side of the altar in the shade of one of the tombs, and gazing upon the other. The sun was nearly setting, the opposite tomb was bathed with the soft, warm light, which streamed in from the window. I remained watching the placid and heroic countenance of the old doge, the sunlight playing on it, till it seemed to smile. The melodious voices of the choir, praying for Contarini, came flowing along the roof with so much sentiment and sweetness, that I was soon wrapped in self-oblivion, and although my eye was apparently fixed upon the tomb, my mind wandered in delightful abstraction.

A temporary cessation of the music called me to myself. I looked around, and to my surprise, I beheld a female figure kneeling before the altar. At this

moment, the music recommenced. She evidently did not observe me. She threw over her shoulders the black veil, with which her face had hitherto been covered. Her eyes were fixed upon the ground; her hands raised, and pressed together in prayer. I had never beheld so beautiful a creature. She was very young, her countenance perfectly fair, but without colour, or tinted only with the transient flush of devotion. Her features were very delicate, yet sharply defined. I could mark her long eyelashes touching her cheek, and her dark hair, parted on her white brow, fell on each side of her face in tresses of uncommon length and lustre. Altogether she was what I had sometimes fancied as the ideal of Venetian beauty. As I watched her, her invocation ceased,

and she raised her large dark eyes with an expression of melancholy, that I never shall forget.

And as I gazed upon her, instead of feeling agitated and excited, a heaviness crept over my frame, and a drowsiness stole over my senses. Enraptured by her presence, anxiously desirous to ascertain who she might be, I felt, to my consternation, each moment, more difficulty in moving, even in seeing. The tombs, the altar, the kneeling suppliant, moved confusedly together, and mingled into mist, and sinking back on the tomb, which supported me, I fell, as I supposed, into a deep slumber.

I dreamed that a long line of Venetian nobles, two by two, passed before me, and, as they passed, they saluted me, and the

two doges were there, and, as they went by, they smiled and waved their bonnets. And suddenly there appeared my father alone, and he was dressed in a northern dress, the hunting dress I wore in the forest of Jonsterna, and he stopped and looked upon me with great severity, and I withdrew my eye, for I could not bear his glance, and when I looked up again he was not there, but the lady of the altar. She stood before me clinging to a large crucifix, a large crucifix of ebony, the same that I had beheld in the chapel in the gardens on the Brenta. The tears hung quivering on her agitated countenance. I would have rushed forward to console her, but I woke.

I woke, I looked around, I remembered everything. She was not there. It was

twilight, and the tombs were barely perceptible. All was silent. I stepped forth from the altar into the body of the church. A single Acolyte was folding up the surplices and placing them in a trunk. I inquired, if he had seen any lady go out. He had seen nothing. He stared at my puzzled look, which was the look of a man roused from a very vivid dream. I went forth; one of my gondoliers was lying on the steps; I asked him also, if he had seen any lady go out. He assured me that no person had come forth, except the priests. Was there any other way? They believed not. I endeavoured to re-enter the church to examine, but it was locked.

VIII.

IF ever the science of metaphysics cease to be a frivolous assemblage of unmeaning phrases, and we attempt to acquire that knowledge of our nature, which is doubtless open to us, by the assistance of facts instead of words; if ever, in short, the philosophy of the human mind be based on demonstration, instead of dogma, the strange incident, just related, will perhaps not be considered the wild delusion of a crack-brained visionary. For myself, I have no doubt, that the effect produced upon me by the lady in the church was a magnetic influence, and that the slumber which, at the moment, occasioned me so

much annoyance, and so much astonishment, was nothing less than a luminous trance.

I knew nothing of these high matters then, and I returned to my palace in a state of absolute confusion. It was so reasonable to believe that I had fallen asleep, and that the whole was a dream. Everything was thus most satisfactorily accounted for. Nevertheless I could not overcome my strong conviction, that the slumber, which I could not deny, was only a secondary incident, and that I had positively, really, absolutely, beheld kneeling before the altar that identical and transcendant form, that in my dream, or vision, I had marked clinging to the cross.

I examined the gondoliers on my return home. I elicited nothing. I examined

myself the whole evening. I resolved that I had absolutely seen her. I attended at the church the next day; nothing occurred. I spoke to the priests, I engaged one to keep a constant observation. Nothing ever transpired.

The Villeggiatura was over, the great families returned, the Carnival commenced, Venice was full and gay. There were assemblies every evening. The news, that a young foreign nobleman had come to reside at Venice, of course, quickly spread. My establishment, my quality, and, above all, my name, ensured me a hospitable reception, although I knew not a single individual, and, of course, had not a single letter. I did not encourage their attentions. I went nowhere, except to the Opera, which opened with the carnival.

I have a passion for instrumental music, but I admire little the human voice, which appears to me, with all our exertions, a poor instrument. Sense and sentiment too are always sacrificed to dexterity and caprice. A grand orchestra fills my mind with ideas,—I forget everything in the stream of invention. A prima donna is very ravishing, but while I listen, I am a mere man of the world, or hardly sufficiently well bred to conceal my weariness.

The effect of music upon the faculty of Invention is a subject on which I have long curiously observed, and deeply meditated. It is a finer prelude to creation than to execution. It is well to meditate upon a subject under the influence of music, but to execute, we should be alone, and supported only by our essential and

internal strength. Were I writing, music would produce the same effect upon me as wine. I should, for a moment, feel an unnatural energy and fire, but, in a few minutes, I should discover that I shadowed forth only phantoms, my power of expression would die away, and my pen would fall upon the insipid and lifeless page. The greatest advantage that a writer can derive from music is, that it teaches most exquisitely the art of development. It is in remarking the varying recurrence of a great composer to the same theme, that a poet may learn how to dwell upon the phasis of a passion, how to exhibit a mood of mind under all its alternations, and gradually to pour forth the full tide of feeling.

The last week of the Carnival arrived, in

which they attempt to compress all the frolic, which should be diffused over the rest of the forty days, which, it must be confessed, are dull enough. At Venice, the beauty, and the wildness, of the Carnival still linger. St. Mark's place was crowded with masques. It was even more humorous to observe these grotesque forms in repose, than in action; to watch a monster with a nose a foot long, and asses' ears, eating an ice, or a mysterious being, with a face like a dolphin, refreshing herself with a fan as huge as a parasol. The houses were covered with carpets and tapestry, every place was illuminated, and everybody pelted with sweetmeats and sugar-plums. No one ever seemed to go to bed; the

water was covered with gondolas, and everybody strummed a guitar.

During the last nights of the Carnival, it is the practice to convert the Opera House into a ball-room, and, on these occasions, the highest orders are masqued. The scene is indeed very gay and amusing. In some boxes, a standing supper is always ready, at which all guests are welcome. But masqued you must be. It is even strict etiquette on these occasions for ladies to ramble about the Theatre unattended, and the great diversion of course is the extreme piquancy of the incognito conversations, since in a limited circle, in which few are unknown to each other, it is, of course, not difficult to impregnate this slight parley with a sufficient quantity of Venetian salt.

I went to one of these balls, as I thought something amusing might occur. I went in a domino, and was careful not to enter my box, lest I should be discovered. As I was sauntering along one of the rooms near the stage, a female masque saluted me.

‘We did not expect you,’ she said.

‘I only came to meet you,’ I replied.

‘You are more gallant than we supposed you to be.’

‘The world is seldom charitable,’ I said.

‘They say you are in love.’

‘You are the last person to consider that wonderful.’

‘Really quite chivalric. Why! they said you were quite a wild man.’

‘But you, Signora, have tamed me.’

‘But do you know they say you are in love?’

‘ Well ! doubtless with a charming person.’

‘ Oh ! yes a very charming person. Do you know they say you are Count Narcissus, and in love with yourself?’

‘ Do they indeed ! They seem to say vastly agreeable things I think. Very witty upon my honour.’

‘ Oh ! very witty, no doubt of that, and you should be a judge of wit you know, because you are a poet.’

‘ You seem to know me well.’

‘ I think I do. You are the young gentleman, are you not, who have quarrelled with your Papa?’

‘ That is a very vague description.’

‘ I can give you some further details.’

‘ Oh ! pray spare me, and yourself.’

‘ Do you know, I have written your character?’

‘ Indeed ! It is doubtless as accurate as most others.’

‘ Oh ! it is founded upon the best authorities. There is only one part imperfect. I wish to give an account of your works. Will you give me a list ? ’

‘ I must have an equivalent, and something more interesting than my own character.’

‘ Meet me to night at the Countess Malbrizzi’s.’

‘ I cannot, I do not know her.’

‘ Do not you know, that in Carnival time, a mask may enter any house ? After the ball, all will be there. Will you meet me ? I am now engaged.’

This seemed the opening of an adventure, which youth is not inclined to shun. I assented, and the mask glided away,

leaving me in great confusion and amazement, at her evident familiarity with my history.

IX.

I ARRIVED at the steps of the Malbrizzi Palace amid a crowd of gondolas. I ascended without any announcement into the saloons, which were full of guests. I found, to my great annoyance, that I was the only mask present. I felt that I had been fairly taken in. I perceived that I was an object of universal attention. I had a great inclination to make a precipitate retreat. But on reflection, I determined to take a rapid survey before my departure, and then retire with dignity.

Leaning against a pillar, I flattered myself I appeared quite at my ease.

A lady, whom I had already conjectured to be the mistress of the mansion, advanced and addressed me. 'Time had not yet flown away with her charms.

'Signor Mask,' she said, 'ever welcome, and doubly welcome, if a friend.'

'I fear I have no title to admission within these walls, except the privilege of the season.'

'I should have thought otherwise,' said the lady, 'if you be one for whom many have inquired.'

'You must mistake me for another. It is not probable that any one would inquire after *me*.'

'Shall I tell you your name?'

'Some one has pretended to give me

that unnecessary information already to night.'

'Well! I will not betray you, but I am silent, in the hope that you will, ere midnight, reward me for my discretion by rendering it unnecessary. We trust, that the ice of the North will melt beneath our Venetian sun. You understand me?' So saying, she glided away.

I could not doubt that this lady was the Countess Malbrizzi, and that she was the female mask, who had addressed me in the Opera House. She evidently knew me. I had not long to seek for the source, whence she attained this knowledge. The son of the Austrian Minister at our Court, and who had himself been attached to the legation, passed by me. His uncle was Governor of Venice. Everything was explained.

I moved away, intending to retire. A group, in the room I entered, attracted my attention. Several men were standing round a lady apparently entreating her, with the usual compliments and gesticulations, to play upon the guitar. Her face was concealed from me; one of her suite turned aside, and notwithstanding the difference of her rich dress, I instantly recognized the kneeling lady of the church. I was extremely agitated. I felt the inexplicable sensation, that I had experienced on the tomb. I was fearful that it might end in as mortifying a catastrophe. I struggled against the feeling, and struggled successfully. As I thus wrestled with my mind, I could not refrain from gazing intently upon the cause of my emotion. I felt an overwhelming desire to ascertain who she

might be. I could not take my eyes from her. She impressed me with so deep an interest, that I entirely forgot that any other human beings were present. It was fortunate that I was masqued. My fixed stare must have excited great curiosity.

As I stood thus gazing upon her, and as each moment her image seemed more vividly impressed upon my brain, a chain round her neck snapped in twain, and a diamond cross suspended to it fell to the ground. The surrounding cavaliers were instantly busied in seeking for the fallen jewel. I beheld, for the first time, her tall and complete figure. Our eyes met. To my astonishment, she suddenly grew pale, she ceased conversing, she trembled, and sank into a chair. A gentleman extended to her the cross, she received it,

her colour returned, a smile played upon her features, and she rose from her seat.

The countess passed me. I saluted her. ‘I now wish you to tell me,’ I said, ‘not my own name, but the name of another person. Will you be kind?’

‘Speak.’

‘That lady,’ I said, pointing to the group, ‘I have a very great wish to know who that lady may be.’

‘Indeed!’ said the countess, ‘I have a great wish also that your curiosity should be gratified. That is Signora Alceste Contarini.’

‘Contarini!’ I exclaimed, ‘how wonderful! I mean to say how singular, that is, I did not know——’

‘That there were any other Contarinis but your excellency, I suppose.’

‘It is idle to wear this disguise,’ I said, taking off my mask, and letting my domino slip to the ground. ‘I have ever heard that it was impossible to escape the penetration of the Countess Malbrizzi.’

‘My penetration has not been much exercised to-night, count ; but I assure you I feel gratified to have been the means of inducing you to enter a society, of which the Baroness Fleming was once the brightest ornament. Your mother was my friend.’

‘You have, indeed, the strongest claim then to the respect of her son. But this young lady——’

‘Is your cousin, an orphan, and the last of the Contarinis. You should become acquainted. Permit me to introduce you.’ I accompanied her. ‘Alceste, my love,’

continued the countess, 'those should not be unknown to each other, whom Nature has intended to be friends. Your cousin, Count Contarini Fleming, claims your acquaintance.'

'I have not so many relations that I know not how to value them,' said Alceste, as she extended me her hand. The surrounding gentlemen moved away. We were alone. 'I arrived so unexpectedly at Venice, that I owe to a chance my introduction to one, whose acquaintance I should have claimed in a more formal manner.'

'You are merely then a passing visitor? We heard it was your intention to become a resident.'

'I have become one. It has been too difficult for me to gain this long-desired haven,

again to quit it without a very strong cause. But when I departed from my country, it was for the understood purpose of making a very different course. My father is not so violent a Venetian as myself, and, for aught I know, conceives me now in France or England. In short, I have played truant, but I hope you will pardon me.'

'To love Venice is with me so great a virtue,' she replied with a smile, 'that I fear, instead of feeling all the impropriety of your conduct, I sympathise too much with this violation of duty.'

'Of course, you could not know my father. You may have heard of him. It has always been to me a source of deep regret that he did not maintain his connexion with my mother's family. I inherit something even more Venetian

than her name. But the past is too painful for my father to love to recall it. My mother, you know——’

‘ I am an orphan, and can feel all your misfortune. I think our house is doomed.’

‘ I cannot think so, when I see you.’

She faintly smiled, but her features settled again into an expression of deep melancholy, that reminded me of her countenance in the church.

‘ I think,’ I observed, ‘ this is not the first time I have had the pleasure of seeing you.’

‘ Indeed ! I am not aware of our having before met.’

‘ I may be wrong. I dare say you will think me very strange. But I cannot believe it was a dream, though certainly I was——but really it is too ridiculous.

You know the church where are the tombs of our family?’

‘Yes!’ Her voice was low, but quick. I fancied she was not quite at ease.

‘Well! I cannot help believing that we were once together before that altar.’

‘Indeed! I have returned to Venice a week. I have not visited the church since we came back.’

‘Oh! this must have been a month ago. It certainly is very strange, I suppose it *must* have been a dream, I have sometimes odd dreams, and yet—it is in consequence of that supposed meeting in the church, that I recognized you this evening, and immediately sought an introduction.’

‘I know the church well. To me, I may say to us,’ she added with a gentle inclination of the head, ‘it is of course a spot very interesting.’

‘I am entirely Venetian. I have no thought for any other country. This is not a new sentiment excited by the genius of the place. It was as strong amid the forest and snows of the north, as strong, I may truly say, when a child, as at this moment, when I would peril my life and fortunes in her service.’

‘You are indeed enthusiastic. Alas! enthusiasm is little considered here. We are, at least, still lighthearted, but what cause we have for gaiety, the smilers perhaps know. It is my misfortune not to be one of them. And yet resignation is all that is left us and——’

‘And what?’ I asked, for she hesitated.

‘Nothing,’ she replied, ‘nothing. I believe I was going to add, it is better to forget.’

‘Never! The recollection of the past is still glory. I would sooner be a Contarini amid our falling palaces, than the mightiest noble of the most flourishing of modern empires.’

‘What will your father say to such romance?’

‘I have no father. I have no friend, no relative in the world, except yourself. I have disclaimed my parentage, my country, my allotted career, and all their rights, and honours, and privileges, and fame, and fortune. I have at least sacrificed all these for Venice; for, trifling as the circumstance may be, I can assure you, this merely to find myself a visitant of that enchanting city, I have thrown to the winds all the duties and connexions of my past existence.’

‘But why bind your lot to the fallen and the irredeemable? I have no choice, but to die where I was born, and no wish to quit a country, from which spring all my associations; but you, you have a real country, full of real interests to engage your affections and exercise your duties. In the north, you are a man: your career may be active, intelligent and useful; but the life of a Venetian is a dream, and you must pass your days like a ghost gliding about a city fading in a vision.’

‘It is this very character that interests me. I have no sympathy with Reality. What vanity in all the empty bustle of common life! It brings to me no gratification; on the contrary, most degrading annoyance. It develops all the lowering attributes of my nature. In the world, I

am never happy, but in solitude ; and in solitude so beautiful and so peculiar as Venice, my days are indeed a dream, but a dream of long delight. I gaze upon the beautiful, and my mind responds to the inspiration, for my thoughts are as lovely as my visions.'

'Your Imagination supports you. It is a choice gift. I feel too keenly my Reality.'

'At least, I cannot imagine, that you should either feel, or give rise to, any other feelings but those that are enchanting.'

'Nay ! a truce to compliments. Let me hear something worthier from you.'

'Indeed,' I said seriously, 'I was not thinking of compliments, nor am I in a mood for such frivolities. Yet I wish not to conceal, that, in meeting you this evening, I have experienced the most gratifying incident of my life.'

‘ I am happy to have met you,—if indeed it be possible to be happy about anything.’

‘ Dear Alcesté — may I call you Alcesté?—why should so fair a brow be clouded?’

‘ It is not unusually gloomy; my heaven is never serene. But, see! the rooms are nearly empty, and I am waited for.’

‘ But we shall soon meet again?’

‘ I shall be here to-morrow. I reside with my maternal uncle, Count Delfini. I go out but little, but to-morrow I shall certainly be here.’

‘ I shall not exist until we again meet. I entreat you fail not.’

‘ Oh! I shall certainly be here; and in the mean time, you know,’ she added with a smile, ‘ you can dream.’

‘Farewell, dear Alcesté! you cannot imagine how it grieves me to part.’

‘Adieu!—shall I say Contarini?’

X.

To say that I was in love, that I was in love at first sight—these are weak, worldly, phrases to describe the profound and absorbing passion, that filled my whole being. There was a mystical fulfilment in our meeting, the consciousness of which mingled with my adoration, and rendered it quite supernatural. This was the Adrian bride, that I had come to greet. This was the great and worthy object of so many strange desires, and bewildering dreams, and dark coincidences. I returned to my palace ;

I threw myself into a chair, and sat for hours in mute abstraction. At last, the broad light of morning broke into the chamber: I looked up, glanced round at the ghastly chandeliers, thought of the coming eve, and retired.

In the evening, I hurried to the Opera. I did not see Alceste. I entered the box of the Countess. A young man rose, as I entered, and retired. 'You see,' I said, 'your magic has in a moment converted me into a man of the world.'

'I am not the enchantress,' said the Countess; 'although I willingly believe you are enchanted.'

'What an agreeable assembly you introduced me to last night!'

'I hope that I shall find you a constant guest.'

‘ I fear that you will find me too faithful a votary. I little imagined, in the morning, that I could lay claim to relationship with so interesting a person, as your charming young friend.’

‘ Alcesté is a great favourite of mine.’

‘ She is not here, I believe, to-night?’

‘ I think not: Count Delfini’s box is opposite, and empty.’

‘ Count Delfini is, I believe, some connexion——’

‘ Her uncle. They will be soon, as you are perhaps aware, nearer connected.’

‘ Indeed!’ I said.

‘ You know that Alcesté is betrothed to his son, Count Grimani. By the bye, he quitted the box, as you entered. You know him?’

I sank back in my chair, I turned pale.

‘Do you admire this opera?’ I inquired.

‘It is a pretty imitation.’

‘Very pretty.’

‘We shall soon change it.’

‘Very soon.’

‘They have an excellent opera at St. Petersburg, I understand. You have been there?’

‘Yes. No. I understand very excellent. This house is very hot.’ I rose up, bowed, and abruptly departed.

I instantly quitted the Theatre, covered myself up in my cloak, threw myself down in my gondola, and groaned. In a few minutes, I arrived home. I was quite unexpected. I ran up stairs. Lausanne was about to light the candles. I sent him away. I was alone in the large, dark chamber, which seemed only

more vast and gloomy for the bright moon.

‘Thank God!’ I exclaimed, ‘I am alone. Why do I not die! Betrothed! It is false; she cannot be another’s. She is mine; she is my Adrian bride. Destiny has delivered her to me. Why did I pass the Alps! Heaven frowned upon my passage. Yet I was expected. I was long expected. Poh! she *is* mine. I would cut her out from the heart of a legion. Is she happy? Her ‘heaven is never serene.’ Mark that. I will be the luminary to dispel these clouds. Betrothed! Infamous jargon! She belongs to me. Why did I not stab him! Is there ne’er a bravo in Venice, that will do the job? Betrothed! What a word! What an infamous—what a ridiculous,

word! She is mine, and she is betrothed to another. Most assuredly, if she be only to be attained by the destruction of the city, she shall be mine. A host of Del-finis shall not baulk me.

‘Now this is no common affair. It shall be done, and it shall be done quickly. I cannot doubt she loves me. It is as necessary that she should love me, as that I should adore her. We are bound together by Fate. We belong to each other: “I have been long expected.”’

‘Ah! were these words a warning or a prophecy? Have I arrived too late? Let it be settled at once, this very evening. Suspense is madness. She is mine, most assuredly, she is mine. I will not admit for a moment, that she is not mine. That idea cannot exist in my thoughts. It is

the end of the world, it is Doomsday for me. Most assuredly, she is my Adrian bride, my *bride*, not my *betrothed* merely, but my *bride*.

‘ Let me be calm. I am calm. I never was calmer in my life. Nothing shall ruffle, nothing shall discompose me. I will have my rights. This difficulty will make our future lives more sweet. We shall smile at it in each other’s arms. Grimani Delfini! If there be blood in that name, it shall flow. Sooner than another should possess her, she should herself be sacrificed. A solemn sacrifice, a sweet and solemn sacrifice, consecrated by my own doom! I would lead her to the altar like Iphigenia. I——

‘ Oh! inscrutable, inexorable Destiny, which must be fulfilled! Doom that mortals

must endure, and cannot direct—lo! I kneel down before thee, and I pray!—Let it end, let it end, let it end at once! This suspense is insanity. Is she not mine! Didst thou not whisper it in the solitude of the North, didst thou not confirm it amid the thunder of the Alps, didst thou not re-animate my drooping courage, even amid this fair city I so much love, this land of long and frequent promise? And shall it not be! Do I exist, do I breathe, and think, and dare — am I a man, and a man of strong passions and deep thoughts — and shall I, like a vile beggar upon my knees, crave the rich heritage that is my own by right? If she be not mine, there is no longer Venice, no longer human existence, no longer a beautiful and everlasting world. Let it all cease;

let the whole globe crack and shiver ; let all nations and all human hopes expire at once ; let Chaos come again, if this girl be not my bride !’

I determined to go to the Malbrizzi Palace. My spirit rose, as I ascended the stairs. I felt confident she was there. Her form was the first, that occurred to me, as I entered the saloon. Several persons were around her, among them Grimani Delfini. I did not care. I had none of the jealousy of petty loves. She was unhappy, that was sufficient, and if there were no other way of disentangling the mesh, I had a sword that should cut this Gordian knot in his best blood. I saluted her. She presented me to her cousin. I smiled upon one, who, at all events, should be my victim.

‘ I hope that we shall make Venice agreeable to you, Count,’ said Grimani.

‘ There is no doubt,’ I replied.

We conversed for some time on indifferent subjects. My manner was elated. I entered into the sparkling contest of conversation with success. The presence of Alcesté was my inspiration. I would not quit her side, and in time, we were once more alone.

‘ You are ever gay,’ she remarked.

‘ My face is most joyful, when my heart is most gloomy. Happiness is tranquil. Why were you not at the Opera?’

‘ I go out very little.’

‘ I went there only to meet you. I detest these assemblies. You are always surrounded by a crowd of moths. Will you dance?’

‘ I have just refused Grimani.’

‘ I am glad of it. I abhor dancing. I only asked you, to monopolise your company.’

‘ And what have you been doing to-day? Have you seen all our spectacles?’

‘ I have just risen. I did not go to bed last night. I sat up musing over our strange meeting.’

‘ Was it so strange?’

‘ It was stranger than you imagine.’

‘ You are mysterious.’

‘ Everything is mysterious, although I have been always taught the reverse.’

‘ I believe too,’ she remarked with a pensive air, and in a serious tone, ‘ that the courses of this world are not so obvious as we imagine.’

‘ The more I look upon you, the more

I am convinced that yesterday was not our first meeting. We have been long acquainted.'

'In dreams?'

'What you please. Dreams, visions, prophecies, I believe in them all. You have often appeared to me, and I have often heard of you.'

'Dreams are doubtless very singular.'

'They come from heaven. I could tell you stories of dreams, that would indeed surprise you.'

'Tell me.'

'When I was about to pass the Alps,—but really it is too serious a narrative for such a place. Do you know the villa of the Temple on the Brenta?'

'Assuredly, for it is my own.'

‘Your own! Then you are indeed mine.’

‘What can you mean?’

‘The temple, the temple——’

‘And did you write upon the wall?’

‘Who else? Who else? But why I wrote—that I would tell you.’

‘Let us walk to the end of these rooms. There is a terrace, where we shall be less disturbed.’

‘And where we have been long expected.’

‘Ah!’

XI.

‘It is wonderful, most wonderful!’ and she leant down, and plucked a flower.

‘I wish I were that flower,’ I said.

‘It resembles me more than you, Con-
tarini,’ and she threw it away.

‘I see no resemblance.’

‘It is lost.’

I picked it up, and placed it in my bosom.

‘It is found,’ I replied, ‘and cherished.’

‘We are melancholy,’ said Alcesté,
‘and yet we are not happy. Your philo-
sophy—is it quite correct?’

‘I am happy, and you should resemble me, because I wish it.’

‘ Good wishes do not always bring good fortunes.’

‘ Destiny bears to us our lot, and Destiny is perhaps our own will.’

‘ Alas! my will is brighter than my doom!’

‘ Both should be beautiful, and shall —’

‘ Oh! talk not of the future. Come Contarini, come, come away.’

XII.

SHALL I endeavour to recall the soft transport, which this night suffused itself over my being? I existed only for one object; one idea only was impressed upon my brain. The next day passed in a

delicious listlessness, and utter oblivion of all cares and duties. In the evening, I rose from the couch, on which I had the whole day reclined musing on a single thought, and flew to ascertain whether that wizard Imagination had deceived me, whether she were, indeed, so wondrous fair and sweet, and that this Earth could indeed be graced by such surpassing loveliness.

She was not there. I felt her absence as the greatest misfortune that had ever fallen upon me. I could not anticipate existing four-and-twenty hours without her presence. I lingered in expectation of her arrival. I could hear nothing of her. Each moment, I fancied she must appear. It seemed impossible that so bitter a doom awaited me, as that I should not gaze this

night upon her beauty. She did not come. I remained to the last, silent and anxious, and returned home to a sleepless bed.

The next morning I called at the Delfini Palace, to which I had received an invitation. Morning was an unusual time to call, but for this I did not care. I saw the old count and countess, and her ladyship's cavalier, who was the most frivolous and ancient Adonis I had ever witnessed. I talked with them all, all of them with the greatest good humour, in the hope that Alcesté would at length appear. She did not. I ventured to inquire after her. I feared she might be unwell. She was quite well, but engaged with her confessor. I fell into one of my silent rages, kicked the old lady's poodle, snubbed the cavalier, and stalked away.

In the evening, I was careful to be at the Malbrizzi Palace. The Delfinis were there, but not Alcesté. I was already full of suspicions, and had been brooding the whole morning over a conspiracy. ‘Alcesté is not here;’ I observed to the Countess, ‘Is she unwell?’

‘Not at all. I saw her this morning. She was quite well. I suppose Count Grimani is jealous.’

‘Hah!’ thought I, ‘has it already come to that? Let us begin then. I feel very desperate. This affair must be settled. Fed by her constant presence and her smiles, the flame of my passion could for a time burn with a calm and steady blaze—but I am getting mad again. I shall die, if this state of things last another day. I have half a mind to invite

him to the terrace, and settle it at once. Let me see, cannot I do more?’

I mused a moment, quitted the saloon, called the gondola, and told them to row me to the Delfini Palace.

We glided beneath that ancient pile. All was dark, save one opened window, whence proceeded the voice of one singing. I knew that voice. I motioned to the gondoliers to rest upon their oars.

‘ ’Tis the Signora Contarini,’ whispered Tita, who was acquainted with the family.

We floated silently beneath her window. Again she sang.

‘ I marked a rose bedewed with tears, a white, and virgin rose; and I said, “ Oh ! rose, why do you weep, you are too beautiful for sorrow ? ” ’

And she answered, "Lady, mourn not for me, for my grief comes from Heaven."

She was silent. I motioned to Tita, who like many of the gondoliers, was gifted with a fine voice, to answer. He immediately sang a verse from one of the favourite ballads of his city. While he sung, I perceived her shadow, and presently I observed her in the middle of the apartment. I plucked from my breast a flower, which I had borne for her to the Malbrizzi Palace, and cutting off a lock of my hair, I tied it round the rose, and threw it into the chamber.

It fell upon the table. She picked it up, she stared at it for some moments, she smiled, she pressed it to her lips.

I could restrain myself no longer. I

pushed the gondola alongside the palace, clambered up the balcony, and entered the room.

She started, she nearly shrieked, but restrained herself.

‘ You are surprised, Alcesté, perhaps you are displeased. They are endeavouring to separate us, I cannot live without you.’

She clasped her hands, and looked up to heaven with a glance of anguish.

‘ Yes! Alcesté,’ I exclaimed, advancing, ‘ let me express what my manner has never attempted to conceal, let me express to you my absolute adoration. I love you, my Alcesté, I love you with a passion as powerful as it is pure, a passion which I cannot control, a passion which ought not to be controlled.’

She spoke not, she turned away her head, and deprecated my advances with her extended arms.

‘Alcesté, I know all. I know the empty, the impious ceremony, that has doomed you to be the bride of a being, whom you must abhor. My Alcesté is not happy. She herself told me her heaven was not serene—the heaven in whose light I would for ever lie.’

I advanced, I stole her hand, I pressed it to my lips. Her face was hidden in her arm, and that reclined upon a pillar.

There was for a moment silence. Suddenly she withdrew her hand, and said, in a low but distinct voice, ‘Contarini, this must end.’

‘End! Alcesté, I adore you. You—you dare not say you do not love me.’

Our will is not our own. Destiny has linked us together, and Heaven has interposed to consecrate our vows. And shall a form, a dull, infamous form, stand between our ardent and hallowed loves!’

‘It is not that, Contarini, it is not that, though that were much. No, Contarini, I am not yours.’

‘Not mine, Alcesté! not mine? Look upon me. Think who I am, and dare to say you are not mine. Am I not Contarini Fleming? Are not you my Adrian bride? Heaven has delivered you to me.’

‘Alas! alas! Heaven keeps me from you.’

‘Alcesté, you see kneeling before you, one who is indeed nothing, if Fame be what some deem. I am young, Alcesté, the shadow of my mind has not yet fallen

over the Earth. Yet there is that within me,—and at this moment, I prophecy,—there is that within me, which may yet mould the mind and fortunes of my race—and of this heart capable of these things, the fountains are open, Alceste, and they flow for you. Disdain them not, Alceste, pass them not by with carelessness. In the desert of your life, they will refresh you—yes, yes, they can indeed become to you a source of all felicity.

‘ I love you with a love worthy of your being ; I love you as none but men like me can love. Blend not the thought of my passion with the common-place affections of the world. Is it nothing to be the divinity of that breathing shrine of inspiration, my teeming mind ? Oh ! Alceste, you know not the world to which I can

lead you, the fair and glorious garden, in which we may wander for ever ! ’

‘ I am lost ! ’ she exclaimed, ‘ but I am yours.’

I caught her in my arms ; yea ! I caught her in my arms, that dark-eyed daughter of the land I loved. I sealed her sweet lips with passionate kisses. Her head rested on my breast ; and I dried, with embraces, her fast-flowing tears.

XIII.

I HAD quitted Alcesté so abruptly, that I had made no arrangements for our future meeting. Nor indeed for some time could I think of anything but my present and

overflowing joy. So passionately was I entranced with all that had happened, so deeply did I muse over all that had been said and done, so sweetly did her voice linger in my ear, and so clearly did her fond form move before my vision, that hours elapsed before I felt again the craving of again beholding her. I doubted not that I should find her at the Malbrizzi Palace. I was disappointed, but my disappointment was not bitter, like the preceding eve. I felt secure in our secret loves, and I soon quitted the assembly again to glide under her window. All was dark. I waited, Tita again sang. No light appeared, no sound stirred.

I resolved to call at the palace, to which I had received the usual general invitation. The family were out, and at the Pisani

Palace. I returned to Madame Malbrizzi's. I looked about for my young Austrian acquaintance. I observed him, I fell into conversation. I inquired, if he knew Count Pisani, and on his answering in the affirmative, I requested him to accompany me there. We soon arrived at the Pisani Palace. I met the Delfinis, but no Alcesté. I spoke to the Countess. I listened to several stories about her lap-dog, I even anticipated her ancient cavalier in picking up her glove. I ventured to inquire after Alcesté. They believed she was not quite well. I quitted the palace, and repaired again to the magical window. Darkness and silence alone greeted me. I returned home, more gloomy than anxious.

In the morning, Lausanne brought me

a letter. I broke the seal with a trembling hand, and with a faint blush. I guessed the writer. The words seemed traced by love. I read.

‘ I renounce our vows, I retract my sacred pledge, I deliver to the winds our fatal love.

‘ Pity me, Contarini, hate me, despise me, but forget me.

‘ Why do I write? Why do I weep? I am nothing, oh! I am nothing. I am blotted out of this fair creation, and the world that should bring me so many joys, brings me only despair.

‘ Do not hate me, Contarini, do not hate me. Do not hate one who adores you. Yes! adore—for even at this dread moment, when I renounce your love, let me, let me pour forth my adoration.

‘Am I insensible? am I unworthy of the felicity, that for an instant we thought might be mine? Oh! Contarini, no one is worthy of you, and yet I fondly believed my devotion might compensate for my imperfectness.

‘To be the faithful companion of his life, to be the partner of his joy and sorrow, to sympathise with his glory, and to solace his grief—I ask no more, I ask no more, thou Heaven! Wilt thou not smile upon me? Wilt thou, for whom I sacrifice so much, wilt thou not pity me?

‘All is silent. There is no sign. No heavenly messenger tells me I may be happy. Alas! alas! I ask too much, I ask too much. It is too great a prize. I feel it, I believe it. My unworthiness is great, but I am its victim.

‘ Contarini, let this console you. I am unworthy of you. Heaven has declared I am unworthy of you. Were I worthy of you, Heaven would not be cruel. Oh! Contarini, let this console you. You are destined for higher joys. Think not of me, Contarini, think not of me, and I— I will be silent.

‘ Silent! And where? Oh! world, that I now feel that I could love, beautiful, beautiful world—thou art not for me, thou art not for me, and Heaven, Heaven, to whom I offer so much, surely, surely, in this agony, it will support me.

‘ I must write, although my pen refuse to inscribe my woe; I must write, although my fast flowing tears bathe out the record of my misery. Oh! my God! for one moment, uphold me. Let the future at least

purchase me one moment of present calm !
Let me spare, at least, him ! Let me, at
least, in this last act of my love, testify my
devotion by concealing my despair.

‘ You must know all, Contarini, you
must know all. You must know all, that
you may not hate me. Think me not
light, think me not capricious. It is my
constancy that is fatal, it is my duty that
is my death.

‘ You love our country, Contarini, you
love our Italy. Fatal, fatal Italy ! Oh !
Contarini, fly, fly, away from us. Cross
again those Alps that Heaven frowned
upon you, as you passed. Unhappy
country ! I am the victim of thy usages,
who was born to breathe amid thy beauty.
You know the customs of this land. The
Convent is our school—it leads to the

Cloister, that is too often our doom. I was educated in a Tuscan Convent. I purchased my release from it, like many of my friends, and the price was my happiness, which I knew not then how to prize. The day that I quitted the Convent, I was the betrothed bride of Grimani Delfini. I was not then terrified by that, the memory of which now makes me shudder. It is a common, though an unhallowed incident.

‘I entered that world, of which I had thought so much. My mind developed with my increased sphere of knowledge. Let me be brief. I soon could not contemplate without horror the idea of being the bride of a man I could not love. There was no refuge. I postponed, by a thousand excuses, our union. I had re-

course to a thousand expedients to dissolve it. Vain struggling of a slave! In my frenzy, the very day that you entered Italy, I returned to Florence on the excuse of visiting a friend, and secretly devoted myself to the cloister. The Abbess, allured by the prospect of attaining my property for her institution, became my confidante, and I returned to Venice only to make in secret the necessary preparations for quitting it for ever.

‘The Delfinis were on the Brenta. I repaired one day to the villa which you visited, and which, though uninhabited, became, from having been the favourite residence of my father, a frequent object of my visits. As I walked along the terrace, I perceived for a moment, and at a distance, a stranger crossing the lawn. I

retired into the chapel, where I remained more than an hour. I quitted the chapel and walked to the temple. I was attracted by some writing on the wall. I read it, and although I could ascribe to it no definite meaning, I could not help musing over it. I sat down in a chair at the head of the table. Whether I were tired by the walk, or overpowered by the heat, I know not, but an unaccustomed drowsiness crept over my limbs, and I fell asleep. I not only fell asleep, but oh ! Contarini, I dreamed, and my dream was wonderful and strange.

‘I found myself alone in the cloisters of a convent, and I heard afar the solemn chaunt of an advancing procession. It became louder and louder, and soon I perceived the nuns advancing with the Abbess

at their head. And the Abbess came forward to claim me, and to my horror, her countenance was that of Grimani Delfini. And I struggled to extricate myself from her grasp, and suddenly the stranger of the morning rushed in, and caught me in his arms, and the cloisters melted away, and I found myself in a beautiful country, and I woke.

‘The Sun had set. I returned home, pensive and wayward. Never had I thought of my unhappy situation with more unhappiness. And each night the figure of the stranger appeared to me in my dreams, and each day I procrastinated my return to Florence. And in the agitation which these strange dreams produced, I determined to go and pray at the tombs of my fathers. I quitted the Villa Delfini

with a single female attendant, and returned to it the same day. I entered the Church through a private door from the adjoining building, which was a house of charity founded by our family.

‘ You know the rest, Contarini, you know the rest. We met. The stranger of my dreams stood before me. My heart before that meeting was already yours, and when you whispered to me, that you too——

‘ Woe ! woe ! why are we not happy ! You said that Heaven had brought us together. Alas ! Contarini, Heaven, Heaven has parted us. I avoided you, Contarini. I flew from the spell which each instant grew stronger. You sought me. I yielded. Yes ! I yielded, but long vigils shall atone for that fatal word.

‘ Go, Contarini, go forth in glory and in pride. I will pray for you, I will ever think

of you, I will ever think of my best, my only beloved. All the prosperity human imagination can devise, and heavenly love can grant, hover over you! You will be happy, you must be happy. For my sake, you will be happy—and I—I am alone, but I am alone with my Redeemer.

ALCESTÉ.

‘ Ere you have received this, I shall have crossed the Apennines—pursuit is hopeless; and my Contarini will, I am sure, respect my vow.’

It was read. My spirit was never more hushed in my life—I was quite calm. She might be in a convent, and it might be necessary to burn the convent down, and both of us might probably perish in the flames. But what was death to the threatened desolation? I sent for Lau-

sanne. ‘Lausanne,’ I said, ‘I have a very high opinion of your talents and energy. I have hitherto refrained from putting them to the test, for particular reasons. A circumstance has occurred in which I require not only their greatest exertion, but devotion and fidelity. If you accomplish my wish, you are no longer my servant, you are my friend for life. If you fail, it matters little, for I shall not survive. But if you betray me, Lausanne——’ and I looked through his very soul.

‘The consequences may be fatal to me. I understand you. When I entered your service, you are under a mistake if you consider my fidelity restricted.’

‘It is well; I place implicit trust in you. Signora Contarini has quitted Venice suddenly. Her present abode is a secret.

She informs me, that she has departed for Tuscany, and is by this time in a convent. This may be to mislead me, or to gain time—I wish to ascertain it.’

‘There will be no difficulty, my Lord,’ said Lausanne with a smile. ‘There are no secrets in Venice to the rich.’

‘It is well. I shall remain in this room, until I hear from you. I care not how much is expended. Away! and for God’s sake, Lausanne, bring me good news.’

XIV.

I WALKED up and down the room without stopping. Not an idea crossed my mind. In two hours, Lausanne returned.

‘Well, well?’ I exclaimed.

‘There is, I think, little doubt, that the Signora departed for the Villa Delfini. She may now have quitted it. I sent Tita to the palace, as he is acquainted with the household. This is all he could elicit.’

‘The gondola, the gondola. Rest you here, Lausanne, and let me know when I return what ships are about to leave the port. Tell the banker I shall want money—a considerable sum; two thousand sequins; and let the bills be ready for my signature. And, Lausanne,’ I added in a low tone, ‘I may require a priest. Have your eye upon some fellow, who will run over the ceremony without asking questions. If I be any time absent, say I have gone to Trieste.’

My gondoliers skimmed along. We were soon at Fusina. I shook my purse

to the postilion. The horses were ready in an instant. I took Tita with me, as he knew the servants. We dashed off at a rate, which is seldom achieved on those dull, sandy roads. We hurried on for three, or four, hours. I told Tita to have his eye for any of the Delfini household. As we were passing the gate of the Villa of the Temple, he turned round on the box, and said, 'By the blood of the holy Baptist, your Excellency, there is the little Maria, Signora Alcesté's attendant. She just now entered that side door. I knew her by the rose-coloured ribbons which I gave her last Carnival.'

'Did she see us?'

'I think not, for the baggage would have smiled.'

'Drive back a hundred yards.'

It was sunset. I got out of the carriage, and stole into the gardens of the Villa unperceived. I could see no lights in the building. From this I inferred, that Alcesté was perhaps only paying a farewell visit to her father's house. I ran along the terrace, I observed no one. I gained the chapel. I instinctively trod very lightly. I glanced in at the window. I perceived a form kneeling before the altar. There was a single candle. The kneeling figure leant back with clasped hands. The light fell upon the countenance. I beheld the face of Alcesté Constarini.

I opened the door gently, but it roused her. I entered.

‘I come,’ I said, ‘to claim my bride.’

She screamed, she jumped upon the

altar, and clung to the great ebony cross. It was the same figure, and the same attitude, that I had beheld in my vision in the church.

‘Alceste,’ I said, ‘you are mine. There is no power in Heaven or Earth, there is no infernal influence that can prevent you from being mine. You are as much part of me as this arm with which I now embrace you.’ I tore her from the cross, I carried her fainting form out of the chapel.

The moon had risen. I rested on a bank, and watched with blended passion and anxiety her closed eyes. She was motionless, and her white arms drooped down apparently without life. She breathed, yes! she breathed. That large eye opened, and darkened into light. She

gazed around with an air of vacancy. A smile, a faint, sweet smile, played upon her face. She slightly stretched her beautiful frame, as if again to feel her existence, and moved her beautiful arms, as if to try whether she yet retained power over her limbs. Again she smiled, and exclaiming ‘Contarini!’ threw them round my neck.

‘Oh! my Alceste, my long-promised Alceste, you are indeed mine.’

‘I am yours, Contarini. Do with me what you like.’

XV.

WE walked to the temple, in order that she might compose herself before her journey. I sat down in the same chair, but not alone. Alceste was in my arms. Happiness is indeed tranquil, for our joy was full, and we were silent. At length, I whispered to her that we must go. She rose, and we were about to leave the temple, when she would go back, and kiss my inscription.

She remembered the maid, whom I had forgotten. I sent Tita to tell his friend, that a carriage had arrived from Madame Malbrizzi's for his mistress, who was obliged suddenly to return, and that she

was to remain behind. I wrapped Alcesté in my cloak, and placed her in my arms in the carriage, and then returned to Venice.

The gondola glided swiftly to my palace. I carried Alcesté out, and bore her in my arms to her apartment. She entreated that I would not, for a moment, quit her. I was obliged therefore to receive Lausanne's report at the door. There was no vessel immediately about to depart, but a ship had quitted the port that morning for Candia, and was still beating about in the offing. He had himself seen the captain, who was content to take passengers, provided they would come out to him. This suited my plans. Lausanne had induced the captain to lie-to till the morning. A priest, he told me, was waiting.

I broke to Alcesté, lying exhausted upon the sofa, the necessity of our instant departure, and our instant union. She said it was well; that she should never be at ease till she had quitted Venice, and that she was ready. I postponed our marriage until the night, and insisted upon her taking some refreshment, but she could not eat. I gave directions to Lausanne to prepare for our instant departure. I resolved to take Tita with me, with whom I was well pleased.

I was anxious about the marriage, because, although I believed it invalid in a Catholic country without a dispensation, it would, as I conceived, hold good in Protestant law. I was careful of the honor of the Contarinis, and at this moment was not unmindful of the long line

of northern ancestry, which I did not wish my child to disgrace.

The ingenuity of Lausanne was always remarkable at conjunctures like the present. The magic of his character was his patience. This made him quicker, and readier, and more successful than all other men. He prepared everything, and anticipated wants of which we could not think.

Two hours before midnight, I was united, by the forms of the Catholic Church, to Alcesté Contarini, the head of the most illustrious house in Europe, and the heiress of a fortune which, in spite of its decay, was not unworthy of her birth. Two servants were the only witnesses of an act, to fulfil which she imagined herself to peril her eternal welfare, and which

exercised a more certain and injurious influence over her worldly fortunes and reputation.

At day-break, Lausanne roused me, saying that the wind was favourable, and we must be off. He had already dispatched Tita to the ship with all our baggage. I rose, wrote to my banker, informing him that I should be absent some time, and requesting him to manage everything for my credit, and then I kissed my still sleeping wife. The morning light fell upon her soft face. A slight flush melted away as I gazed upon her, and she opened her eyes, and smiled. Never had she looked more beautiful. I would have given half my fortune to have been permitted to remain at Venice in tranquillity and peace.

But doubly sweet is the love that is gained by danger, and guarded by secrecy. All was prepared. We stepped, perhaps for the last time, into a gondola. The grey sea was before us, we soon reached the ship, Tita and the Captain were standing at the ladder-head. The moment that we embarked, the sails were set, and a dashing breeze bore us along out of the Gulf. Long ere noon, that Venice, with its towers and cupolas, which I had forfeited so much to visit, and all those pleasant palaces wherein I could have lived for ever, had faded into the blue horizon.

XVI.

THE ship was an Imperial merchant brig. The wife of the Captain was on board, a great convenience for Alcesté, who was without female attendance, and, with the exception of some clothes the provident Lausanne had obtained from Tita's sister, without a wardrobe. But these are light hardships for love, and the wind was favourable, and the vessel fleet. We were excellent sailors, and bore the voyage without inconvenience, and the novelty of the scene, and the beauty of the sea, amused and interested us.

I imbibed from this voyage a taste for a sea life, which future wanderings on the

waters have only confirmed. I never find the sea monotonous. The variations of weather, the ingenious tactics, the rich sunsets, the huge, strange fish, the casual meetings, and the original and racy character of mariners, and perhaps also the frequent sight of land, which offers itself in the Mediterranean, afford me constant amusement. I do not think, that there is in the world a kinder-hearted, and more courteous person, than a common sailor. As for their attentions to Alcesté, they were even delicate, and I am sure, that although a passionate lover, I might have taken many a hint from their vigilant solicitude. Whenever she was present, their boisterous mirth was instantly repressed. She never walked the deck, that a ready hand was not quick in clearing her

path of any impediments, and ere I could even discover she was weary, their watchful eyes anticipated her wants, and they proffered her a rude, but welcome seat. Ah! what a charming voyage was this, when my only occupation was to look upon an ever smiling face, and to be assured a thousand times each hour, that I was the cause of all this happiness.

Lausanne called me one morning on deck. Our port was in sight. I ran up; I beheld the Highlands of Candia—a rich, wild group of lofty blue mountains, and in the centre, the snowy peak of Mount Ida. As we approached, the plain, extending from the base of the mountains to the coast, became perceptible, and soon, a town and harbour.

We were surrounded by boats full of

beings in bright and strange costumes. A new world, a new language, a new religion, were before us. Our deck was covered with bearded and turbaned men. We stared at each other in all this picturesque confusion, but Lausanne, and especially Tita, who spoke Greek, and knew Candia well, saved us from all anxiety. We landed, and, thanks to being in a Turkish province, there was no difficulty about passports, with which we were unprovided, and a few sequins saved the captain from explaining why his passengers were not included in his ship's papers. We landed, and were lodged in the house of a Greek, who officiated as an European vice-consul.

The late extraordinary incidents of our lives had followed each other with such rapidity, that when we woke in the morn-

ing, we could scarcely believe, that it was not all a dream. We looked round our chamber with its strange furniture, and stared at the divans, and small, high windows, shadowed with painted glass, and smiled. Our room was darkened, but, at the end, opened an arch bright in the sun. Beautiful strange plants quivered in the light. The perfume of orange trees filled our chamber, and the bees were clustering in the scarlet flowers of the pomegranate. Amid the pleasing distraction of these sweet sounds and scents we distinguished the fall of a fountain.

We stole forward to the arch, like a prince and princess just disenchanted in a fairy tale. We stepped into a court paved with marble, and full of rare shrubs. The fountain was in the centre. Around it

were delicate mats of Barbary, and small bright Persian carpets ; and crouching on a scarlet cushion, was a white gazelle.

I stepped out, and found our kind host, who spoke Italian. I sent his lovely daughter, Alexina, whose cheeks were like a cleft pomegranate, to my wife. As for myself, by Lausanne's advice, I took a Turkish bath, which is the most delightful thing in the world, and when I was reduced to a jelly, I repaired to our host's divan, where his wife, and three other daughters, all equally beautiful, and dressed in long, flowing robes of different coloured velvets richly embroidered, and caps of the same material, with tassels of gold, and covered with pearls, came forward. One gave me a pipe, seven feet long, another fed me with sweetmeats, a third pressed

her hand to her heart, as she presented me coffee in a small cup of porcelain resting in a fillagree frame, and a child, who sparkled like a fairy, bent her knee, as she proffered me a vase of sherbet. I felt like a Pasha, and the good father translated my compliments.

I thought that Alcesté would never appear, and I sent Lausanne to her door fifty times. At length, she came, and in a Greek dress, which they had insisted upon her wearing. I thought we should have both expired with laughing. We agreed, that we were perfectly happy.

This was all very delightful, but it was necessary to arrange our plans. I consulted Lausanne. I wished to engage a residence in a retired part of the island. We spoke to our host. He had a country

house, which would exactly suit us, and desired a tenant. I sent Lausanne immediately to examine it. It was only fifteen miles away. His report was most satisfactory, and I, at once, closed with the Consul's offer.

The house was a long, low building, in the Eastern style, with plenty of rooms. It was situate on a very gentle, green hill, the last undulation of a chain of Mount Ida, and was perfectly embowered with gardens, and plantations of olive and orange. It was about two miles from the sea, which appeared before us in a wild and rocky bay. A peasant, who cultivated the gardens, with his wife and children, two daughters just breaking into womanhood, and a young son, were offered to us

as servants. Nothing could be more convenient. Behold us at length at rest!

XVII.

I HAVE arrived at a period of my life, which, although it afforded me the highest happiness that was ever the lot of man, of which the recollection is now my never-ceasing solace, and to enjoy the memory of which is alone worth existence, cannot prove very interesting to those, who have been sufficiently engaged by my history, to follow me to my retirement in ancient Crete.

My life was now monotonous, for my life was only love.

I know not the palling of passion, of which some write. I have loved only once, and the recollection of the being to whom I was devoted, fills me at this moment with as much rapture, as when her virgin charms were first yielded to my embrace. I cannot comprehend the sneers of witty rakes, at what they call Constancy. If beings are united by any other consideration but Love, constancy is of course impossible, and I think, unnecessary. To a man, who is in love, the thought of another woman, is uninteresting, if not repulsive. Constancy is human nature. Instead of love being the occasion of all the misery of this world, as is sung by fantastic bards, I believe, that the misery of this world is occasioned by there not being love enough. This opinion, at

any rate, appears more logical. Happiness is only to be found in a recurrence to the principles of human nature, and these will prompt very simple manners. For myself, I believe that permanent unions of the sexes should be early encouraged; nor do I conceive that general happiness can ever flourish but in societies, where it is the custom for all males to marry at eighteen. This custom, I am informed, is not unusual in the United States of America, and its consequence is a simplicity of manners, and a purity of conduct, which Europeans cannot comprehend, but to which they must ultimately have recourse. Primeval barbarism, and extreme civilization, must arrive at the same results. Men, under these circumstances, are actuated by their organization; in the first

instance, instinctively, in the second, philosophically. At present, we are all in the various gradations of the intermediate state of corruption.

I could have lived with Alcesté Con-
tarini in a solitude for ever. I desired
nothing more than to enjoy existence with
such a companion. I would have com-
municated to her all my thoughts and
feelings. I would have devoted to her
solitary ear the poetry of my being. Such
a life might not suit others. Others in-
fluenced by a passion not less ardent, may
find its flame fed by the cares of life,
cherished by its duties and its pleasures,
and flourishing amid the travail of society.
All is an affair of organization. Ours
would differ. Among all men, there are
some points of similarity and sympathy.

There are few alike, there are some perfectly unlike the mass. The various tribes that people this globe, in all probability, spring from different animals. Until we know more of ourselves, what use are our systems? For myself, I can conceive nothing more idle, or more useless, than what is styled Moral Philosophy. We speculate upon the character of man; we divide and we subdivide; we have our generals, our sages, our statesmen. There is not a modification of mind, that is not mapped in our great atlas of Intelligence. We cannot be wrong, because we have studied the Past, and we are famous for discovering the Future, when it has taken place. Napoleon is first Consul, and would found a dynasty. There is no doubt of it. Read my character of Crom-

well. But what use is the discovery, when the Consul is already tearing off his republican robe, and snatching the Imperial Diadem? And suppose, which has happened, and may, and will, happen again, suppose a being of a different organization to Napoleon, or Cromwell, placed in the same situation,—a being gifted with a combination of intelligence hitherto unknown, where then is our Moral Philosophy, our nice study of human nature? How are we to speculate upon results, which are to be produced by unknown causes? What we want is to discover the character of a man at his birth, and found his education upon his nature. The whole system of moral philosophy is a delusion, fit only for the play of sophists in an age of physiological ignorance.

I leave these great speculations for the dreariness of future hours. Alcesté calls me to the golden sands, whither it is our wont to take our sunset walk.

A Grecian sunset! The sky is like the neck of a dove, the rocks and waters are bathed with a violet light. Each moment, it changes; each moment, it shifts into more graceful, and more gleaming, shadows. And the thin, white moon is above all, the thin, white moon, followed by a single star—like a lady by a page.

XVIII.

WE had no books, no single source of amusement, but our own society, and yet the day always appeared a moment. I

did indeed contrive to obtain for Alcesté what was called a mandolin, and which, from its appearance, might have been an ancient lyre. But it was quite unnecessary. My tongue never stopped the whole day. I told Alcesté everything. All about my youthful scrapes and fancies, and Musæus and my battle, and Winter, and Christiana, and the confounded tragedy, and, of course, Manstein. If I for a moment ceased, she always said ‘Go on.’ On I went, and told the same stories over again, which she reheard with the same interest. The present was so delightful to me, that I cared little to talk about the past, and always avoided the future. But Alcesté would sometimes turn the conversation to what might happen, and, as she now promised to heighten our happiness by

bringing us a beautiful stranger to share our delightful existence, the future began to interest even me.

I had never written to my father, since I arrived at Paris. Every time I drew a bill, I expected to find my credit revoked, but it was not so. And I therefore willingly concluded that Lausanne apprised him of everything, and that he thought fit not to interfere. I had never written to my father, because I cannot dissemble, and as my conduct, ever since I quitted France, had been one continued violation of his commands and wishes, why, correspondence was difficult, and could not prove pleasing. But Alcesté would talk about my father, and it was therefore necessary to think of him. She shuddered at the very name of Italy, and willingly looked forward to a settle-

ment in the north. For myself, I was exceedingly happy, and my reminiscences of my fatherland were so far from agreeable, that I was careless as to the future, and although I already began to entertain the possibility of a return, I still wished to pass some considerable time of our youth inviolate by the vulgar cares of life, and under the influence of a glowing sky.

In the mean time, we rambled about the mountains on our little, stout, Candote horses, or amused ourselves in adorning our residence. We made a new garden. We collected every choice flower, and rare bird, and beautiful animal, that we could assemble together. Alcesté was wild for a white gazelle, ever since we had seen one in the Consul's court. They come from a particular part of Arabia,

and are rare. Yet one was obtained, and two of its fawn-coloured brethren. I must confess, that we found these elegant and poetical companions extremely troublesome and stupid. They are the least sentimental and domestic of all creatures. The most sedulous attention will not attach them to you, and I do not believe they are ever fairly tame. I dislike them, in spite of their liquid eyes and romantic reputation, and infinitely prefer what are now my constant and ever delightful company, some fine, faithful, honest, intelligent, thorough-bred English dogs.

We had now passed nearly eight months in this island. The end of the year was again advancing. Oh! the happy, the charming evenings, when fearing for my Alcesté, that it grew too cool to walk, we

sat within the house, and the large lamp was lit, and the faithful Lausanne brought me my pipe, and the confounded gazelle kicked it over, and the grinning Tita handed us our coffee, and my dear, dear Alcesté sang me some delicious Venetian melody, and then I left off smoking, and she left off singing, and we were happier and happier every day.

Talk of Fame and Romance—all the glory and adventure in the world are not worth one single hour of domestic bliss ! It sounds like a claptrap, but the solitary splendour, with which I am now surrounded, tells me, too earnestly, it is truth.

XIX.

THE hour approached that was to increase my happiness, my incredible happiness. Blessed, infinitely blessed as I was, bountiful Heaven was about to shower upon me a new and fruitful joy. In a few days I was to become a father. We had obtained from the town all necessary attendance: an Italian physician, whose manner gave us confidence, a sage woman of great reputation, were at our house. I had myself been cautious that my treasure should commit no imprudence. We were full of love and hope. My Alcésté was not quite well. The physician recommended great quiet. She

was taking her siesta, and I stole from her side, because my presence ever excited her, and she could not slumber.

I strolled down to the bay, and mused over the character of a father. My imagination dwelt only upon this idea. I discovered, as my reverie proceeded, the fine relations that must subsist between a parent and a child. Such thoughts had made no impression upon me before. I thought of my own father, and the tears stole down my cheek. I vowed to return to him immediately, and give ourselves up to his happiness. I prayed to Heaven to grant me a man-child. I felt a lively confidence that he would be choicely gifted. I resolved to devote myself entirely to his education. My imagination wandered in dreams of his perfect character, of his

high accomplishments, his noble virtues, his exalted fame. I conceived a philosopher, who might influence his race, a being to whom the regeneration of his kind was perhaps allotted.

My thoughts had rendered me unconscious of the hour; the sun had set without my observation; the growing twilight called me to myself. I looked up, I beheld, in the distance, Alcesté. I was surprised, displeased, alarmed. I could not conceive anything more imprudent than her coming forth in the evening, and in her situation. I ran forward to reprimand her with a kiss, to fold her shawl more closely round her, and bear her in my arms to the house. I ran forward, speaking at the same time. She faintly smiled. I reached her. Lo! she was not there!

A moment before, she was on the wide sands. There was no cavern near in which she could have entered. I stood amazed, thunderstruck. I shouted ‘Alcesté!’

The shout was answered. I ran back. Another shout; Tita came to me running. His agitated face struck me with awe. He could not speak; he seized my arm, and dragged me along. I ran to the house. I did not dare to inquire the cause. Lausanne met me at the threshold. His countenance was despair. I stared like a bewildered man, I rushed to her room. Yet, I remember the group leaning round our bed. They moved aside. I saw Alcesté. She did not see me. Her eyes were closed, her face pale and changed, her mouth had fallen.

‘What,’ I said, ‘what is all this? Doctor, doctor, how is she?’

The physician shook his head.

I could not speak. I wrung my hands, more from the inability of thought and speech, than grief, by which I was not influenced.

‘Speak, speak!’ I at length said, ‘is she dead?’

‘My lord——’

‘Speak, speak, speak!’

‘It appears to me to be desperate.’

‘It is impossible! Dead! She cannot be dead. Bleed her, bleed her, Sir, before me. Dead! Did you say dead? Nonsense, nonsense! Alcesté, Alcesté, speak to me. Say you are not dead, only say you are not dead. Bleed her, Sir, bleed her.’

To humour me, he took up his lancet, and opened another vein. A few, dull drops oozed out.

‘Ah!’ I exclaimed, ‘See! she bleeds! She is not dead. Alceste, Alceste! you are not dead? Lausanne, do something Lausanne. For God’s sake, Lausanne, save her. Do something, Lausanne. My good Lausanne, do something!’

He affected to feel her pulse. I staggered about the room, wringing my hands.

‘Is she better?’ I inquired.

No one answered.

‘Doctor, save her! Tell me she is better, and I give you half—my whole fortune.’

The poor physician shook his head. He attempted nothing. I rushed to Lausanne, and seized his arm.

‘Lausanne, I can trust you. Tell me the truth. Is it all over?’

‘It has too long been over.’

‘Ah!’ I waved my hands, and shrieked, and fell.

XX.

WHEN my self-consciousness was restored, I found myself in another room. I was lying in a divan in the arms of Lausanne. I had forgotten everything. I called Alcesté. Then the remembrance rushed into my brain.

‘Is it true,’ I said, ‘Lausanne, is it true?’

His silence was an answer. I rose, and walked up and down the room once or twice, and then I said, in a low voice, ‘Take me to the body, Lausanne.’

I leant upon his arm, and entered the chamber of our joys. Even as I entered, I indulged the wild hope that I should find it unoccupied. I could not believe it. Yes, yes, she was dead!

Tall candles were burning in the room; the walls were hung with solemn drapery. I advanced to the bedside. I took her hand. I motioned to Lausanne to retire. We were alone, alone once more. But how alone? I doubted of everything. I doubted of my existence. I thought my heart would burst. I wondered why anything still went on. Why was not all over? I looked round with idiot eyes, and opened mouth. A horrid contortion was chiselled on my face.

Suddenly I seized the corpse in my arms, and fiercely embraced it. I thought

I could re-animate it. I felt so much I thought I could reanimate it. I struggled with death. Was she dead? Was she really dead? It had a heavy, leaden feel. I let her drop from my arms. She dropped like a lifeless trunk. I looked round with a silly grin.

It was mooning time. The flames of the candles looked haggard. There was a Turkish dagger in the closet. I remembered it. I ran to the closet. I cut off her long tresses. I rolled them round my neck. I locked the door. I stole out of the window. I cunningly watched to observe, whether I were followed. No one was stirring, or no one suspected me. I scudded away fleetly. I rushed up the hills. I never stopped. For hours, I could never have stopped. I have a faint

recollection of chasms, and precipices, and falling waters. I leapt everything. I found myself at length on a peak of Mount Ida.

A wide view of the ocean opened before me. As I gazed upon it, my mind became inflamed,—the power of speech was restored to me,—the poetry of my grief prevailed.

‘Fatal Ocean! fatal Ocean!’ I exclaimed,—‘A curse upon thy waves, for thou wafted us to death. Green hills! green valleys! a blight upon thy trees and pastures, for she cannot gaze upon them! And thou, red Sun! her blood is upon thy beams. Halt in thy course, red Sun! halt! and receive my curse!’

‘Our house has fallen, the glorious house has fallen; and the little ones may now

rise. Eagle! fly away, and tell my father he is avenged. For lo! Venice has been my doom, and here on this toppling crag, I seal all things, and thus devote Contarini Fleming to the infernal Gods!’

I sprang forward, I felt myself in the air. My brain span round, my sight deserted me. I fell.

XXI.

WHEN I can again recall existence, I found myself in my own house. I was reclining on the divan propped up by cushions. My left arm was in a sling: my head bandaged. I looked around me without thought, and then I relapsed into apathy. Lausanne was in the room, and

passed before me. I observed him, but did not speak. He brought me refreshment, which I took without notice. The room was darkened. I knew nothing of the course of time, nor did I care, or inquire. Sometimes Lausanne quitted the apartment, and then Tita took his place. Sometimes he returned, and changed my bandages and my dress, and I fell asleep. Awake, I had no thought, and slumbering, I had no dreams.

I remained in this state, as I afterwards learnt, six weeks. One day, I looked up, and seeing Tita, spoke in a faint voice, and asked for Lausanne. He ran immediately for him, and while he was a moment absent, I rose from my couch, and tore the curtain from the window. Lausanne entered, and came up to me, and

would have again led me to my seat, but I bid him 'lighten the room.'

I desired to walk forth into the air, and leaning on his arm, I came out of the house. It was early morn, and I believe the sense of the fresh air had attracted and revived me. I stood for a moment vacantly gazing upon the distant bay, but I was so faint that I could not stand, and Spiro, the little Greek boy, ran, and brought me a carpet and a cushion, and I sat down. I asked for a mirror, which was unwillingly afforded me; but I insisted upon it. I viewed, without emotion, my emaciated form, and my pallid, sunken visage. My eyes were dead and hollow, my cheek bones prominent and sharp, my head shaven, and covered with a light turban. Nevertheless, the feeling of the

free, sweet air was grateful; and from this moment, I commenced gradually to recover.

I never spoke, except to express my wants, but my appetite returned, my strength increased, and each day, with Lausanne's assistance, I walked for a short time in the garden. My arm, which had been broken, resumed its power; my head, which had been severely cut, healed. I ventured to walk only with the aid of a stick. Gradually, I extended my course, and, in time, I reached the sea-side. There, in a slight recess formed by a small headland, I would sit with my back against a high rock, feel comforted, that Earth was hidden from my sight, and gaze for hours in vacancy upon the Ocean and the Sky. At sunset, I stole home. I

found Lausanne always about, evidently expecting me. When he perceived me returning, he was soon by my side, but by a way that I could not observe him, and, without obtrusion, or any appearance of officiousness, led, or rather carried, me to my dwelling.

One morning, I bent my way to a small green valley, which opened on the other side of our gardens. It had been one of our most favourite haunts. I know not why I resorted to it this morning, for, as yet, her idea had never crossed my mind, any more than her name my lips. I had an indefinite conviction, that I was a lost and fallen man. I knew, that I had once been happy, that I had once mingled in a glorious existence ; but I felt with regard to the past, as if it were another system of

being, as if I had suddenly fallen from a star, and lighted on a degenerate planet.

I was in our valley, our happy valley. I stood still, and my memory seemed to return. The tears stole down my face. I remembered the cluster of orange trees, under which we often sat. I plucked some leaves, and I pressed them to my lips. Yet I was doubtful, uncertain, incredulous. I scarcely knew who I was. Not indeed that I was unable to feel my identity, not indeed that my intelligence was absolutely incapable of fulfilling its office, but there seemed a compact between my body and my mind, that existence should proceed without thought.

I descended into the vale. A new object attracted my attention. I approached it without suspicion. A green

mound supported a stone, on which was boldly, but not rudely sculptured,

‘ALCESTE, COUNTESS CONTARINI FLEMING.’

A date recorded her decease.

‘It must have been many years ago,’ was my first impression; ‘I am Contarini Fleming, and I remember her. I remember Alcesté well, but not in this country, surely not in this country. And yet those orange trees——

‘My wife, my lost, my darling wife, oh! why am I alive! I thought that I was dead! I thought that I had flung myself from the mountain top to join you——and it was all a dream!’

I threw myself upon the tomb, and my tears poured forth in torrents, and I tore up the flowers that flourished upon the

turf, and kissed them, and tossed them in the air.

There was a rose, a beautiful, white rose, delicate and fragrant; and I gathered it, and it seemed to me like Alcesté. And I sat gazing upon this fair flower, and as my vision was fixed upon it, the past grew up before me, and each moment I more clearly comprehended it. The bitterness of my grief overcame me. I threw away the rose, and, a moment after, I was sorry to have lost it. I looked for it. It was not at my feet. My desire for the flower increased. I rose from the tomb, I looked around for the lost treasure. My search led me to the other side of the tablet, and I read the record of the death of my still-born son.

*A splendid idea - worthy
the Mademoiselle's - long
a monument for my son's*

XXII.

‘WE must leave this place, Lausanne, and at once.’

His eye brightened when I spoke.

‘I have seen all that you have done, Lausanne. It is well, very well. I owe you much. I would have given much for her hair, more than I can express. But you are not to blame. You had much to do.’

He left the room for a moment, and returned,—returned with the long, the beautiful tresses of my beloved.

‘Oh! You have made me so happy. I never thought that I should again know

what joy was. How considerate! How very good!’

He broke to me gently, that he had found the tresses around my neck. I rubbed my forehead, I summoned my scattered thoughts,—‘I remember something,’ I replied, ‘but I thought it was a dream. I fancied that in a dream I had quitted the house.’

He told me all. He told me that, after three days’ search, he had found me among the mountains, hanging to the rough side of a precipice, shattered, stark, and senseless. The bushes had caught my clothes, and prevented a fatal fall.

XXIII.

A SHIP was about to leave the port for Leghorn. And why not go to Leghorn? Anywhere but Venice. Our arrangements were soon made. I determined to assent to the request of his father, in taking little Spiro, who was a favorite of Alcesté, and had charge of her gazelles. A Greek father is very willing to see his son anywhere but among the Turks. I promised his family, not only to charge myself with his future fortunes, but also to remit them an annual allowance through the Consul, provided they cherished the tomb of their late mistress, and in a fortnight I was again on board.

The mountains of Candia were long in sight, but I avoided them. Our voyage was very long, although not unpleasant. We were often becalmed. The air and change of scene benefited me much. I wonderfully resumed my old habits of reverie, and as I paced the deck, which I did all day without ceasing, I mused over the past with feelings of greater solace than I ever anticipated could associate with it. I was consoled by the remembrance of our perfect love. I could not recall on either of our parts a single fretful word, a single occasion on which our conduct had afforded either of us an anxious, or even annoying moment. We never had enjoyed those lovers' quarrels, which are said to be so sweet. Her sufferings had been intense, but they had been brief. It

would have been consolatory to have received her last breath, yet my presence might have occasioned her greater agony. The appearance of her spirit assured me that, at the moment of departure, her last thought was for me. The conviction of her having enjoyed positive happiness supported me. I was confident, that had it been possible to make the decision, she would not have yielded her brief and beautiful career for length of days unilluminated by the presence of him, who remained to consecrate her memory by his enduring love—perhaps by his enduring page.

Ah! old feelings returned to me. I perceived that it was impossible to exist without some object, and Fame, and Poetic Creation offered themselves to my

void heart. I remembered that the high calling to which I was devoted, had been silently neglected. I recollected the lofty education, and loftier results, that travel was to afford, and for which travel was to prepare me. I reminded myself, that I had already proved many new passions, become acquainted with many new modifications of feeling, and viewed many new objects. My knowledge of man and nature was very much increased. My mind was full of new thoughts, and crowded with new images.

As I thus mused, that separation of the mere individual from the universal poet, which ever occurred in these high communings, again took place. My own misfortunes seemed but petty incidents to one who could exercise an illimitable power

over the passions of his kind. If, amid the common losses of common life, the sympathy of a single friend can bear its balm, could I find no solace, even for my great bereavement, in the love of nations, and the admiration of ages?

Thus reflecting, I suddenly dashed into Invention, and in my almost constant walks on deck, I poured forth a crowd of characters, and incidents, and feelings, and images, and moulded them into a coherent and, as I hoped, beautiful form. I longed for the moment when I could record them on a scroll more lasting than my memory, and upheld by this great purpose, I entered with a calm, if not cheerful, countenance, the famous port of Leghorn.

PART THE FOURTH.

I.

I WAS at length at Florence. The fair city so much vaunted by poets at first greatly disappointed me. I could not reconcile myself to those unfinished churches like barns, and those gloomy palaces like prisons. The muddy Arno was not poetical, and the site of the whole place, and the appearance of the surrounding hills, in spite of their white villas, seemed to me confined, monotonous, and dull. Yet there is a charm in Florence, which although difficult precisely to define, is in its influence very great and growing, and I scarcely know a place that I would prefer for a residence. I think it is the

character of Art, which both from ancient associations, and its present possessions, is forcibly impressed upon this city. It is full of Invention. You cannot stroll fifty yards, you cannot enter a church or palace, without being favourably reminded of the power of human thought. It is a famous memorial of the genius of the Italian middle ages, when the mind of man was in one of its spring tides, and in which we mark so frequently what at the present day we too much underrate—the influence of individual character.

In Florence, the monuments are not only of great men, but of the greatest. You do not gaze upon the tomb of an author, who is merely a great master of composition, but of one, who formed the language. The illustrious astronomer is not the dis-

coverer of a planet, but the revealer of the whole celestial machinery. The artist and the politician are not merely the first sculptors and statesmen of their time, but the inventors of the very art and the very craft in which they excelled.

The study of the Fine Arts mutually assists each other. In the formation of my style, I have been perhaps more indebted to Music and to Painting, even than to the great masters of literary composition. The contemplation of the Venetian school had developed in me a latent love of gorgeous eloquence, dazzling incident, brilliant expression, and voluptuous sentiment. These brought their attendant imperfections, exaggeration, effeminacy, the obtrusion of art, the painful want of nature. The severe simplicity of the Tuscan masters chastened my mind. I mused over a

great effect produced almost by a single mean. The picture that fixed my attention by a single group illustrating a single passion, was a fine and profitable study. I felt the power of Nature delineated by a great master, and how far from necessary to enforce her influence, were the splendid accessaries with which my meditated compositions would rather have encumbered than adorned her. I began to think more of the individual than the species, rather of the motives of man, than of his conduct. I endeavoured to make myself as perfect in the dissection of his mind, as the Florentine in the anatomy of his body. Attempting to acquire the excellence of my models, I should probably have imbibed their defects; their stiff, and sombre, and arid manner, their want of variety and grace. The Roman school saved me from this,

and taught me that a very chaste or severe conception might be treated in a very glowing or genial style. But after all, I prefer the Spanish to the Italian painters. I know no one to rival Murillo. I know no one, who has blended with such felicity the high ideal with the extreme simplicity of nature. Later in life, I found myself in his native city, in that lovely Seville, more lovely from his fine creations, than even from the orange bowers that perfume its gates, and the silver stream that winds about its plain.

I well remember the tumult of invention in which I wandered day after day amid the halls and galleries of Florence. Each beautiful face that flitted before me was a heroine, each passion that breathed upon the canvass was to be transferred to the page.

I conceived at one time the plan of writing a series of works in the style of each school. The splendour of Titian, the grace of Raffaele, the twilight tints of that magician, Guercino, alternately threw my mind into moods analogous to their creations. A portrait of Ippolyto de' Medici in the Pitti palace, of whom I knew nothing, haunted me like a ghost, and I could only lay the spectre by resolving in time to delineate the spirit of Italian Feudality. The seraphic Baptist in the wilderness re-called the solitude I loved. I would have poured forth a monologue amid the mountains of Judæa, had not Endymion caught my enraptured vision, and I could dream only of the bright goddess of his shadowy love.

I thought only of Art. I sought the

society of artists and collectors. I unconsciously adopted their jargon. I began to discourse of copies, and middle tints, and changes of style. I was in great danger of degenerating into a Dilettante. Little objects, as well as great, now interested me. I handled a bronze and speculated upon its antiquity. Yet even these slight pursuits exercised a beneficial tendency upon a mind wild, irregular, and undisciplined; nor do I believe, that any one can long observe even fine carvings and choice medals without his taste becoming more susceptible, and delicate, and refined.

My mind was overflowing with the accumulated meditation and experience of two years, an important interval in all lives, past in mine in constant thought and action, and in a continual struggle with

new ideas and novel passions. The desire of composition became irresistible. I recurred to the feelings with which I had entered Leghorn, and from which I had been diverted amid the distraction produced by the novelty, the beauty, and the variety of surrounding objects. With these feelings, I quitted the city, and engaged the Villa Capponi, situate on a green and gentle swell of the Apennines, near the Tower of Galileo.

II.

IF there were anything in the world for which I now entertained a sovereign contempt, it was my unfortunate Manstein. My most malignant critic must have

yielded to me in the scorn which I lavished on that immature production, and the shame with which I even recollected its existence. No one could be more sensible of its glaring defects, for no one thought more of them, and I was so familiar with its less defective parts, that they had lost all their relish, and appeared to me as weak and vapid, and silly as the rest.

(I never labour to delude myself. I never gloss over my faults. I exaggerate them. I can afford to face truth, for I feel capable of improvement.) And indeed I have never yet experienced that complacency with which, it is said, some authors regard their offspring, nor do I think that this paternal fondness will ever be my agreeable lot. I am never satisfied. No sooner have I executed some conception,

than my mind soars above its creation, and meditates a higher flight in a purer atmosphere. The very exercise of power only teaches me, that it may be wielded for a greater purpose.

I prepared myself for composition in a very different mood to that in which I had poured forth my fervid crudities in the Garden House. Calm and collected, I constructed characters on philosophical principles, and mused over a chain of action which should develop the system of our existence. All was Art. I studied contrasts and grouping, and metaphysical analysis was substituted for anatomical delineation. I was not satisfied that the conduct of my creations should be influenced merely by the general principles of their being. I resolved that they should

be the very impersonations of the moods and passions of our mind. One was Ill-regulated Will: another offered the formation of a Moral Being: Materialism sparkled in the wild gaiety and reckless caprice of one voluptuous girl, while Spirit was vindicated in the deep devotion of a constant and enthusiastic heroine. Even the lighter temperaments were not forgotten. Frivolity smiled, and shrugged his shoulders before us, and there was even a deep personification of Cynic Humour.

Had I executed my work in strict unison with my plan, it would doubtless have been a very dull affair. For I did not yet possess sufficient knowledge of human nature to support me in such a creation, nor was I then habituated to those metaphysical speculations, which

might have, in some degree, compensated, by their profundity, for their want of entertainment. But Nature avenged herself, and extricated me from my dilemma.

I began to write ; my fancy fired, my brain enflamed ; breathing forms rose up under my pen, and jostled aside the cold abstractions, whose creation had cost such long musing. In vain, I endeavoured to compose without enthusiasm, in vain I endeavoured to delineate only what I had preconceived, in vain I struggled to restrain the flow of unbidden invention. All that I had seen, and pondered, passed before me from the proud moment that I stood upon Mount Jura to the present ravishing hour that I returned to my long estranged art. Every tree, every cloud, every star and mountain, every fair lake

and flowing river, that had fed my fancy with their sweet suggestions in my rambling hours, now returned and illumined my pages with their brightness and their beauty. My mind teemed with similies. Thought and Passion came veiled in metaphoric garb. I was delighted, I was bewildered. The clustering of their beauty seemed an evidence of poetic power: the management of these bright guests was an art of which I was ignorant. I received them all. I found myself often writing only that they might be accommodated.

I gave up to this work many long and unbroken hours. I was determined that it should not suffer from a hurried pen. I often stopped to meditate. It was in writing this book, that I first learnt my art. It was a series of experiments.

They were at length finished, and my volumes consigned to their fate and northern publisher.

The critics treated me with more courtesy. What seemed to me odd enough then, although no puzzle now, was, that they admired what had been written in haste, and without premeditation, and generally disapproved of what had cost me much forethought, and been executed with great care. It was universally declared a most unequal work, and they were right, although they could not detect the causes of the inequality. My perpetual efforts at being imaginative were highly reprobated. Now my efforts had been entirely the other way. In short, I puzzled them, and no one offered a prediction as to my future career. My book, as a whole, was

rather unintelligible, but parts were favourites. It was pronounced a remarkable compound of originality and dullness. These critiques, whatever might be their tenor, mattered little to me. A long interval elapsed before they reached Florence, and during that period, I had effectually emancipated myself from the thralldom of criticism.

I have observed, that after writing a book, my mind always makes a great spring. I believe that the act of composition produces the same invigorating effect upon the mind, which some exertion does upon the body. Even the writing of *Manstein* produced a revolution in my nature, which cannot be traced by any metaphysical analysis. In the course of a few days, I was converted from a hollow-

hearted worldling into a noble philosopher. I was indeed ignorant, but I had lost the double ignorance of the Platonists, I was no longer ignorant that I was ignorant. No one could be influenced by a greater desire of knowledge, a greater passion for the beautiful, or a deeper regard for his fellow-creatures. And I well remember when, on the evening that I wrote the last sentence of this more intellectual effort, I walked out upon the terrace with that feeling of satisfaction, which accompanies the idea of a task completed ; so far was I from being excited by the hope of having written a great work, that I even meditated its destruction. For the moment it was terminated, it seemed to me that I had become suddenly acquainted with the long-concealed principles

of my art, which, without doubt, had been slenderly practised in this production. My Taste, as it were in an instant, became formed, and I felt the conviction, that I could now produce some lasting creation.

I thought no more of criticism. The breath of man has never influenced me much, for I depend more upon myself than upon others. I want no false fame. It would be no delight to me to be considered a prophet, were I conscious of being an impostor. I ever wish to be undeceived; but if I possess the organization of a poet, no one can prevent me from exercising my faculty, any more than he can rob the courser of his fleetness, or the nightingale of her song.

III.

AFTER finishing my work, I read more at Florence than I have at any period of my life. Having formed the principles on which in future I intended to proceed in composition, and considering myself now qualified to decide upon other artists, I determined critically to examine the literary fiction of all countries, to ascertain how far my intentions had been anticipated, and in what degree my predecessors might assist me.

It appears to me, that the age of Versification has past. The mode of composition must ever be greatly deter-

mined by the manner in which the composition can be made public. In ancient days, the voice was the medium by which we became acquainted with the inventions of a poet. In such a method, where those who listened had no time to pause, and no opportunity to think, it was necessary that everything should be obvious. The audience who were perplexed would soon become wearied. The spirit of ancient poetry, therefore, is rather material than metaphysical. Superficial, not internal; there is much simplicity and much nature, but little passion, and less philosophy. To obviate the baldness, which is the consequence of a style where the subject and the sentiments are rather intimated than developed, the poem was enriched by music, and enforced by action. Occasionally,

were added the enchantment of scenery, and the fascination of the dance. But the poet did not depend merely upon these brilliant accessories. He resolved that his thoughts should be expressed in a manner different from other modes of communicating ideas. He caught a suggestion from his sister art, and invented metre. And in this modulation, he introduced a new system of phraseology, which marked him out from the crowd, and which has obtained the title of 'poetic diction.'

His object in this system of words was to heighten his meaning by strange phrases, and unusual constructions. Inversion was invented to clothe a commonplace with an air of novelty; vague epithets were introduced to prop up a monotonous modulation; were his meaning

to be enforced, he shrank from wearisome ratiocination and the agony of precise conceptions, and sought refuge in a bold personification, or a beautiful similitude. The art of Poetry was to express natural feelings in unnatural language.

Institutions ever survive their purpose, and customs govern us when their cause is extinct. And this mode of communicating poetic invention still remained, when the advanced civilization of man, in multiplying manuscripts, might have made many suspect that the time had arrived when the poet was to cease to sing, and to learn to write. Had the splendid refinement of Imperial Rome not been doomed to such rapid decay, and such mortifying and degrading vicissitudes, I believe that Versification would have worn out. Un-

questionably that empire, in its multifarious population, scenery, creeds, and customs, offered the richest materials for emancipated Fiction, materials, however, far too vast and various for the limited capacity of metrical celebration.

That beneficent Omnipotence, before which we must bow down, has so ordered it, that Imitation should be the mental feature of Modern Europe; and has ordained that we should adopt a Syrian religion, a Grecian literature, and a Roman law. At the revival of letters, we behold the portentous spectacle of national poets communicating their inventions in an exotic form. Conscious of the confined nature of their method, yet unable to extricate themselves from its fatal ties, they sought variety in increased artifice

of diction, and substituted for the melody of the lyre, the barbaric clash of rhyme.

A revolution took place in the mode of communicating Thought. Now, at least, it was full time that we should have emancipated ourselves for ever from sterile metre. One would have supposed that the Poet who could not write, but even print his inventions, would have felt that it was both useless and unfit that they should be communicated by a process invented when his only medium was simple recitation. One would have supposed, that the Poet would have rushed with desire to the new world before him, that he would have seized the new means that permitted him to revel in an universe of boundless invention; to combine the highest ideal

creation with the infinite delineation of teeming Nature; to unravel all the dark mysteries of our bosoms, and all the bright purposes of our being; to become the great instructor and champion of his species; and not only delight their fancy, and charm their senses, and command their will, but demonstrate their rights, illustrate their necessities, and expound the object of their existence; and all this too in a style charming and changing with its universal theme, now tender, now sportive, now earnest, now profound; now sublime, now pathetic; and substituting for the dull monotony of metre, the most various, and exquisite, and inexhaustible melody.

When I remember the trammels to which the poet has been doomed, and the splendor with which consummate genius

has invested them, and when, for a moment, I conceive him bursting asunder his bonds, I fancy I behold the sacred bird snapping the golden chain that binds him to Olympus, and soaring even above Jove!

IV.

I HAD arrived at Florence in a very feeble and shattered state of health, of which, however, as I had never been an habitual invalid, I thought little. My confidence in my energy had never deserted me. Composition, however, although I now wrote with facility, proved a greater effort, than I had anticipated. The desire I felt of completing my purpose had successfully

sustained me throughout, but, during its progress, I was too often conscious of an occasional, but increasing, languor, which perplexed and alarmed me. Perfect as might be my conception of my task, and easy as I ever found its execution when I was excited, I invariably experienced, at the commencement, a feeling of inertness, which was painful and mortifying. As I did not dream of physical inability, I began to apprehend that, however delightful might be the process of meditation, that of execution was less delicious. Sometimes I even for a moment feared, that there might be a lurking weakness in my nature, which might prevent me from ever effecting a great performance.

I remember one evening as I was meditating in my chamber, my watch lying

upon the table, and the hour nine, I felt, as I fancied, disturbed by the increased sound of that instrument. I moved it to the other side of the table, but the sound increased, and assured that it was not occasioned by the supposed cause, and greatly disturbed, I rang for Lausanne, and mentioned the inconvenience. Lausanne persisted in hearing nothing, but as the sound became even more audible, and as I now believed that some reptile might be in the room, he examined it in all parts. Nothing was perceived; the hum grew louder, and it was not until I jumped up from my seat to assist him in his examination, that I discovered by the increased sound, occasioned by my sudden rise, that the noise was merely in my own ears. The circumstance occasioned me no alarm.

It inconvenienced me for the evening. I retired at an earlier hour, passed, as usual, a restless and dreamy night, but fell asleep towards the morning, and rose tolerably fresh.

I can write only in the morning. It is then I execute with facility all that I have planned the ensuing eve. And this day, as usual, I resumed my pen, but it was not obedient. I felt not only languid and indolent, but a sensation of faintness which I had before experienced and disregarded, came over me, and the pen fell from my hand. I rose and walked about the room. My extremities were cold, as of late in the morning I had usually found them. The sun was shining brightly over the sparkling hills. I felt a great desire to warm myself in his beams. I ordered my horse.

The ride entirely revived me. I fancied that I led perhaps too sedentary a life. I determined, immediately that my book was finished, that I would indulge in more relaxation. I returned home with more appetite than usual, for since my return from Candia, I had almost entirely lost my relish for food, and my power of digestion. In the evening, I was again busied in musing over the scene which was to be painted on the coming morn. Suddenly I heard again the strange noise. I looked at my watch. It was exactly nine o'clock. It increased rapidly. From the tick of a watch, it assumed the loud confused moaning of a bell tolling in a storm, like the bell I had heard at the foot of the Alps. It was impossible to think. I walked about the room. It became louder

and louder. It seemed to be absolutely deafening. I could compare it to nothing but the continuous roar of a cataract. I sat down, and looked around me in blank despair.

Night brought me no relief. My sleep, ever since the death of Alcesté, had been very troubled and broken, and of late, had daily grown less certain, and less refreshing. Often have I lain awake the whole night, and usually have risen exhausted and spiritless. So it was on this morning. Cold, faint, and feeble, the principle of life seemed to wax fainter and fainter. I sent for my faithful companion: 'Lausanne,' I said, 'I begin to think that I am very ill.'

Lausanne felt my pulse, and shook his head. 'There is no wonder,' he replied.

‘ You have scarcely any circulation. You want stimulants. You should drink more wine, and you should give up writing for a time. Shall I send for a physician?’

I had no confidence in medicine. I resolved to exert myself. Lausanne’s advice, I fancied, sounded well. I drank some wine; I felt better; but as I never can write under any inspiration but my own, I resolved to throw aside my pen, and visit Pisa for a fortnight, where I could follow his prescription, with the additional advantage of change of scene.

My visit to Pisa benefited me. I returned, and gave the last finish to my work.

V.

ALL the Italian cities are delightful ; but an elegant melancholy pervades Pisa, that is enchanting. What a marble group is formed by the Cathedral, the wonderful Baptistery, the leaning Tower, and the Campo Santo ; and what an indication of the ancient splendour of the Republic ! I wish that the world consisted of a cluster of small states. There would be much more genius, and, what is of more importance, much more felicity. Federal Unions would preserve us from the evil consequences of local jealousy, and might combine in some general legislation of

universal benefit. Italy might then revive, and even England may regret, that she has lost her Heptarchy.

In the Campo Santo, you trace the history of Art. There too, which has not been observed, you may discover the origin of the Arabesques of Raffaele. The leaning Tower is a stumbling-block to architectural antiquarians. An ancient fresco in the Campo proves the intention of the Artist. All are acquainted with the towers of Bologna; few are aware, that in Saragossa, the Spaniards possess a rival of the architectural caprice of the Pisans.

To this agreeable and silent city, I again returned, and wandered, in meditation, amid the stillness of its palaces. I consider this the period of my life in

which whatever intellectual power I possess became fully developed. All that I can execute hereafter is but the performance of what I then planned, nor would a patriarchal term of life permit me to achieve all that I then meditated. I looked forward to the immediate fulfilment of my long hopes, to the achievement of a work which might last with its language, and the attainment of a great and permanent fame.

I was now meditating over this performance. It is my habit to contrive in my head the complete work, before I have recourse to the pen which is to execute it, I do not think that Meditation can be too long, or Execution too rapid. It is not merely characters, and the general conduct of the story that I thus prepare, but

the connexion of every incident, often whole conversations, sometimes even slight phrases. A very tenacious memory, which I have never weakened by having recourse to other modes of reminiscence, supports me in this process, which however, I should confess, is a very painful and exhausting effort.

I revolved this work in my mind for several months without ever having recourse to paper. It was never out of my consciousness. I fell asleep musing over it: in the morning, my thoughts clustered immediately upon it, like bees on a bed of unexhausted flowers. In my rides, during my meals, in my conversations on common topics, I was indeed, the whole time, musing over this creation.

The profound thinker always suspects

that he is superficial. Patience is a necessary ingredient of Genius. Nothing is more fatal, than to be seduced by the first flutter of the imagination into composition. This is the cause of so many weak and unequal works, of so many worthy ideas thrown away, and so many good purposes marred. Yet there is a bound to meditation; there is a moment when further judgment is useless. There is a moment when a heavenly light rises over the dim world you have been so long creating, and bathes it with life and beauty. Accept this omen that your work is good, and revel in the sunshine of composition.

I have sometimes half believed, although the suspicion is mortifying, that there is only a step between his state who deeply

indulges in imaginative meditation and
Insanity. For I well remember, that at
this period of my life when I indulged in
meditation to a degree which would now
be impossible, and I hope unnecessary,
that my senses sometimes appeared to be
wandering. I cannot describe the peculiar
feeling I then experienced, for I have
failed in so doing to several eminent sur-
geons and men of science with whom I
have conversed respecting it, and who
were curious to become acquainted with
its nature. But I think it was, that I was
not always assured of my identity, or even
existence, for I sometimes found it ne-
cessary to shout aloud to be sure that I
lived, and I was in the habit very often at
night of taking down a volume, and look-
ing into it for my name, to be convinced,

that I had not been dreaming of myself. At these times, there was an incredible acuteness, or intenseness, in my sensations. Every object seemed animated, and, as it were, acting upon me. The only way, that I can devise, to express my general feeling, is, that I seemed to be sensible of the rapid whirl of the globe.

All this time, my health was again giving way, and all my old symptoms gradually returning. I set them at defiance. The nocturnal demon having now come back in all its fullness, I was forced to confine my meditations to the morning, and in the evening, I fled for refuge and forgetfulness to the bottle. This gave me temporary relief, but entirely destroyed my remaining power of digestion. In the morning, I regularly fainted as I dressed.

Still I would not give in, and only postponed the commencement of my work until my return to Florence, which was to occur in a few days.

I rode the journey through the luxuriant Val d'Arno, attended by Tita. Lausanne and Spiro had returned the previous day. It was late in the evening when I arrived at the Villa. I thought, as I got off my horse, that the falls of Niagara could not overpower the infernal roaring that I alone heard. I entered, and threw myself on a sofa. It came at last. What it was I knew not. It felt like a rushing of blood into my brain. I moaned, threw out my arm, and wildly caught at the bell. Lausanne entered, and I was lying apparently lifeless.

VI.

DURING the whole course of my life, my brain had been my constant source of consolation. As long as I could work that machine, I was never entirely without an object and a pleasure. I had laughed at physical weaknesses while that remained untouched; and unquestionably I should have sunk under the great calamity of my life, had it not been for the sources of hope and solace which this faithful companion opened to me. Now it was all over: I was little better than an idiot.

Physician followed physician, and surgeon surgeon, without benefit. They all held different opinions, yet none were right.

They satirized each other in private interviews, and exchanged compliments in consultations. One told me to be quiet; another, to exert myself; one declared that I must be stimulated, another, that I must be soothed. I was, in turn, to be ever on horseback, and ever on a sofa. I was bled, blistered, boiled, starved, poisoned, electrified, galvanised, and at the end of a year, found myself with exactly the same oppression on my brain, and the additional gratification of remembering that twelve months of existence had worn away without producing a single idea. Such are the inevitable consequences of consulting men, who decide by precedents which have no resemblance, and never busy themselves about the idiosyncrasy of their patients.

I had been so overwhelmed by my malady, and so conscious, that upon my cure my only chance of happiness depended, that I had submitted myself to all this treatment without a murmur, and religiously observed all their contradictory directions. Being of a sanguine temperament, I believed every assertion, and every week expected to find myself cured. When, however, a considerable period of time had elapsed without any amelioration, I began to rebel against these systems which induced so much exertion and privation, and were productive of no good. I was quite desperate of cure, and each day I felt more keenly that if I were not cured, I could not live. I wished therefore to die unmolested. I discharged all my medical attendants, and laid myself down like a sick lion in his lair.

I never went out of the house, and barely out of a single room. I scarcely ever spoke, and only for my wants. I had no acquaintance, and I took care that I should see no one. I observed a strict diet, but fed every day. Although air, and medicine, and exercise were to have been productive of so much benefit to me, I found myself, without their assistance, certainly not worse, and the repose of my present system, if possible, rendered my wretched existence less burthensome.

Lausanne afterwards told me, that he supposed I had relapsed into the state in which I fell immediately after my great calamity, but this was not the case. I never lost my mind or memory: I was conscious of everything, I forgot nothing. But I had lost the desire of exercising

them. I sat in moody silence, revolving in reverie, without the labour of thought, my past life and feelings.

I had no hopes of recovery. It was not death that terrified me, but the idea that I might live, and for years, in this helpless and unprofitable condition. When I contrasted my recent lust of fame, and plans of glory, and indomitable will, with my present woeful situation of mysterious imbecility, I was appalled with the marvellous contrast, and I believed that I had been stricken by some celestial influence for my pride and wanton self-sufficiency.

VII.

I WAS in this gloomy state, when one morning Lausanne entered my room ; I did not notice him, but continued sitting with my eyes fixed on the ground, and my chin upon my breast. At last he said, ‘ My Lord, I wish to speak to you.’

‘ Well !’

‘ There is a stranger at the gate, a gentleman, who desires to see you.’

‘ You know I see no one,’ I replied rather harshly.

‘ I know it, and have so said. But this gentleman——’

‘ Good God ! Lausanne, is it my father ?’

‘No. But it is one, who may perhaps come from him.’

‘I will see him.’

The door opened, and there entered Winter.

Long years, long and active years, had past since we parted. All had happened since. I thought of my boyhood, and it seemed innocent and happy, compared with the misery of the past and present. Nine years had not much altered my friend, but me——

‘I fear, Count,’ said Winter, ‘that I am abusing the privilege of an old friend in thus insisting upon an entrance, but I heard of your residence in this country and your illness at the same time, and being at Florence, I thought you would perhaps pardon me.’

‘You are one of the few persons, whom I am glad to see under all circumstances, even under those in which I now exist.’

‘I have heard of your distressing state.’

‘Say my hopeless state. But let us not converse about it. Let us speak of yourself. Let me hope you are as happy as you are celebrated.’

‘As for that well enough. But if we are to talk about celebrity, let me claim the honours of a prophet, and congratulate a poet whom I predicted.’

‘Alas! dear Winter,’ I said with a faint smile, ‘talk not of that, for I shall die without doing you honour.’

‘There is no one of my acquaintance who has less chance of dying.’

‘How so?’ I remarked rather quickly, for when a man really believes he is dying,

he does not like to lose the interest which such a situation produces. 'If you knew all——'

'I know all—much more too, than your physician who told me.'

'And you believe then, that I cannot look forward even to death to terminate this miserable existence?'

'I do not consider it miserable, and, therefore, I should be sorry, if there were anything to warrant such an anticipation.'

'And I can assure you, Chevalier,' and I spoke very sincerely and solemnly, 'that I consider existence on the terms I now possess it, an intolerable burthen. And nothing but the chance, for I cannot call it hope, of amelioration, prevents me from terminating it.'

'If you remember right, you considered

existence equally an intolerable burthen when, as a boy, you first experienced feelings which you were unable to express.'

'Well! what inference do you draw?'

'That it is not the first time you have quarrelled with Nature.'

'How so!' I eagerly replied, and I exerted myself to answer him, 'Is Disease Nature?'

'Is your state disease?'

'I have no mind.'

'You reason.'

'My brain is affected.'

'You see.'

'You believe, then, that I am a hypochondriac?'

'By no means! I believe your feelings are real and peculiar, but it does not therefore follow that they are evil.'

‘Perhaps,’ I said, with a dry smile,
‘you believe them beneficent?’

‘I do certainly,’ he replied.

‘In what respect?’

‘I believe, that as you would not give
Nature a holiday, she is giving herself one.’

I was silent, and mused. ‘But this in-
fernal brain?’ I replied.

‘Is the part of the machinery that you
have worked most; and therefore the
weakest.’

‘But how is it to be strengthened?’

‘Not by medicine. By following exactly
a contrary course to that which en-
feebled it.’

‘For fifteen months, an idea has not
crossed my brain.’

‘Well! you are all the better for it;
and fifteen months more——’

‘Alas! what is life! At this age, I hoped to be famous.’

‘Depend upon it, you are in the right road, but rest assured you must go through every trial, that is peculiar to men of your organization. There is no avoiding it. It is just as necessary, as that life should be the consequence of your structure. To tell you the truth, which is always best, I only came here to please your father. When he wrote to me of your illness, I mentioned to him, that it must have its course, that there was nothing to be alarmed about, and that it was just as much a part of your necessary education, as travel or study. But he wished me to see you, and so I came.’

‘My poor father! Alas! my conduct to him——’

‘Has been just what it ought to be, just what it necessarily must have been, just exactly what my own was to my father. As long as human beings are unphilosophically educated, these incidents will take place.’

‘Ah! my dear Winter, I am a villain. I have never even written to him.’

‘Of course, you have not. Your father tried to turn you into a politician. Had he not forced you to write so many letters then, you would not have omitted to write to him now. The whole affair is simple as day. Until men are educated with a reference to their organization, there will be no end to domestic fracas.’

‘You ever jest, my friend. I have not ventured on a joke for many a long month.’

‘Which is a pity; for to tell you the truth, although your last work is of the tender and sublime, and maketh fair eyes weep, I think your forte is comic.’

‘Do you indeed?’

‘Ah! my dear Contarini, those two little volumes of Manstein—’

‘Oh! mention not the name. Infamous, unadulterated trash!’

‘Ah! exactly as I thought of my first picture, which after all has a freshness and a freedom I have never excelled,—but Manstein, my dear Contarini, it certainly was very impertinent. I read it at Rome. I thought I should have died. All our friends. So very true!’

‘Will you stay with me? I feel a good deal better since you have been here, and what you tell me of my father delights me.’

Pray, pray stay. Well! you are indeed kind. And if I feel very ill, I will keep away.'

'Oh! I should like to see you in one of your fits.'

VIII.

'TAKE a glass of wine,' said Winter, at dinner.

'My dear friend, I have taken one.'

'Take another. Here is your father's health.'

'Well then, here is your's. How is the finest of old men?'

'Flourishing and happy.'

'And your mother?'

'Capital!'

‘ And you have never returned ?’

‘ No! and never will, while there are such places as Rome and Naples.’

‘ Ah! I shall never see them.’

‘ Pooh! the sooner you move about, the better.’

‘ My good friend, it is impossible.’

‘ Why so? Do not confound your present condition with the state you were in a year ago. Let me feel your pulse. Capital! You seem to have an excellent appetite. Don’t be ashamed to eat. In cases like yours, the art is to ascertain the moment to make exertion. I look upon your’s as a case of complete exhaustion. If there be anything more exhausting than Love, it is Sorrow, and if there be anything more exhausting than Sorrow, it is Poetry. You have tried all three. Your

body and your mind both required perfect repose. I perceive that your body has sufficiently rested. Employ it; and in another year, you will find your mind equally come round.'

'You console me. But where shall I go? Home?'

'By no means. You require beauty and novelty. At present, I would not go even to the south of this country. It will remind you too much of the past. Put yourself entirely in a new world. Go to Egypt. It will suit you. I look upon you as an Oriental. If you like, go to South America. Tropical scenery will astonish and cure you. Go to Leghorn, and get into the first ship that is bound for a country, with which you are unacquainted.'

IX.

WINTER remained with me several days, and before he had quitted Florence, I had written to my father. I described to him my forlorn situation, my strong desire to see him, and I stated the advice which did not correspond with my wishes. I asked for his counsel, but said nothing of the great calamity. I was indeed myself extremely unwilling to return home in my present state, but this unwillingness I concealed.

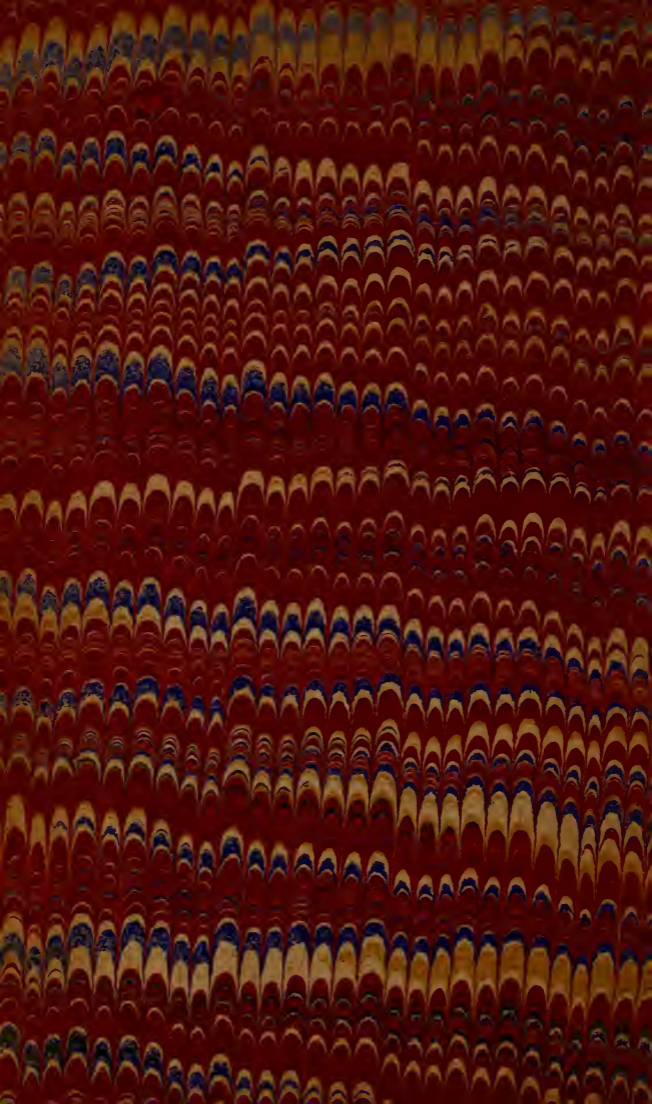
I received an answer from my father by a special courier, an answer the most affectionate. He strongly recommended

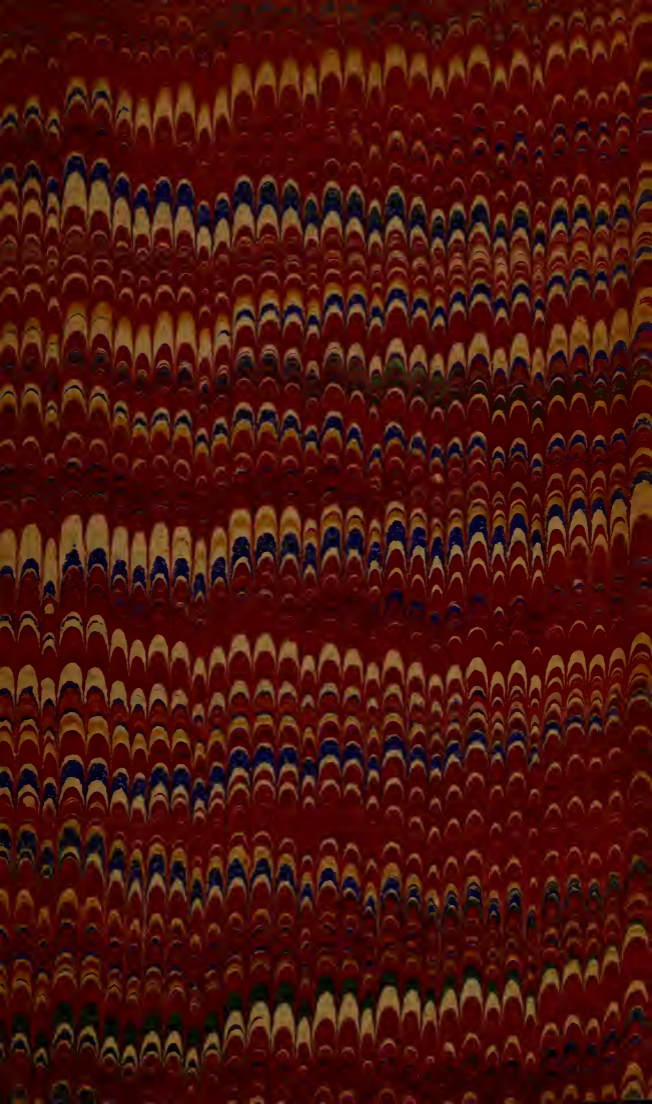
me to travel for some time, expressed his hope and confidence that I should entirely recover, and that I should return and repay him for all his anxiety. All that he required was, that I should frequently correspond with him. And ever afterwards, I religiously respected his request.

A ship was about to sail from Leghorn to Cadiz. Spain appeared an interesting country, and one of which I knew nothing. It is the link between Europe and Africa. To Spain, therefore, I resolved to repair; and in a few days I again quitted Italy, and once more cast my fortunes on the waters!

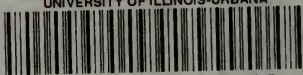
END OF VOLUME III.







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